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THE LIFE

OF

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY



*Percy B. Shelley*





THE LIFE  
OF  
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

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*IN TWO VOLUMES*  
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# LIFE OF SHELLEY.

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## CHAPTER I.

IN SWITZERLAND WITH BYRON (MAY TO SEPTEMBER, 1816).

THE motives which determined Shelley to withdraw from his native country are apparent, at least in part, to one who has read the letters addressed to Godwin in February. It is evident that, on receiving the first intimation that the agreement with his father for the sale of the reversion could not legally be completed, he perceived that he was far from wealthy, and that he deemed it expedient to contract his expenses. On the Continent he could live more economically than at home. It is also evident that, suffering acutely (more, perhaps, on Mary's account than his own) from the social odium and stigma consequent upon his unwedded union with one whom he regarded as, in the truest and deepest sense, his wife, he now proposed to make the experiment of a residence among strangers. In the early summer of 1816, says Peacock, "the spirit of restlessness again came over Shelley, and resulted in a second visit to the Continent." And to the spirit of restlessness, driving him forth in search of a repose never quite attained, something may have been due. But Peacock, it would seem, was not aware that Shelley's resolve to leave England, or at least to withdraw to some remote district, was of no sudden or hasty formation, and that he had delayed to carry that resolve

CHAP. I.  
May-Sept.  
1816.

CHAP. I. into act because the negotiation with his father was awaiting  
 May-Sept. 1816. an issue—an issue which, if favourable, might at once alter Shelley's position and way of life in important respects. The issue, as it proved, was not favourable to Shelley; some few hundred pounds would be allowed to him by his father to cancel obligations incurred during the progress of the affair and in expectation of the result which both father and son desired. For the rest his wealth was in a distant future; but a moderate sufficiency was his, and on this he could live respectably in Italy or Switzerland.

The departure from Bishopsgate, Peacock tells us, was preceded by a mysterious communication from a person seen only by Shelley himself, warning him of immediate personal perils to be incurred by him if he should remain.\* It was Williams of Tremadoc who had called to inform Shelley of a plot laid by his father and uncle to entrap him and lock him up. He had walked with Williams as far as Egham; the hat which he had worn while walking was still in Shelley's hand; but the hat was, in fact, Peacock's, and when he put it on it went over his face. "You are very sceptical," said Shelley. "Will you walk with me to London to-morrow morning to see Williams?" But on the morrow, when half-way down Egham Hill, he suddenly faced Peacock with the words, "I do not think we shall find Williams at the Turk's Head; he mentioned a contingency under which he might leave town yesterday." "Neither do I think we shall find him," replied Peacock; and their walk turned towards the forest. A few days later, "I have some news of Williams," said Shelley; "a letter and an enclosure. I cannot show you the letter; I will show you the enclosure. It is a diamond necklace; he has sent it to prove his identity and sincerity." "Surely," said Peacock, "your showing me a diamond necklace will prove nothing but that you have one to show." "Then," said

\* In what follows I abbreviate Peacock's narrative, and curtail the dialogue.

Shelley, "I will not show it to you. If you will not believe me, I must submit to your incredulity." There, adds the nar-  
CHAP. I.  
May-Sept.  
1816.
rator, the matter ended; "I never heard another word of Williams, or of any other mysterious visitor." Such "semi-delusions," Peacock maintained, had their basis in Shelley's firm belief that his father and uncle had designs on his liberty, and had they been received with a searching scepticism, they would not have been often redelivered. This tale concerning Williams may, indeed, have been a delusion or "semi-delusion;" but knowing as we do for certain that Shelley at this time contemplated a residence in some remote part of the country; that his fancy often turned to Wales, where, in the preceding summer, he had requested Williams to find him a house; that he was still a debtor to Williams, though the greater portion of the debt had been paid; and that, on leaving Tremadoc, he had consigned to the care of Mr. and Mrs. Nanney certain properties, perhaps as a security for the loan which he received; it may be worth considering whether Williams may not actually have called at Bishopsgate, and, learning that Shelley's negotiation with his father had ended disastrously, whether he may not have spoken of the possibility of Sir Timothy's allowing his son to make acquaintance with a debtors' prison as a cure for his rash incurring of obligations on his own account and on behalf of needy friends.\* That Shelley, on entering the house, had laid down his own hat, and, intending to go out again, had taken up Peacock's by mistake, is not difficult to suppose; and it is by no means incredible that if Shelley had paid off a Welsh debt, a necklace of Harriet's, containing diamonds, left with Williams or Mrs. Nanney as security, may at length have been restored to its rightful owner. That Shelley, under peculiar excitement, was subject to strange delusion or misconception of fact, cannot be doubted by any unprejudiced investigator of his life; that his judgment was ordinarily clear and vigorous is also unquestionable.

\* Peacock himself had been arrested for debt not long before this date.

CHAP. I. Without rejecting the theory of delusion or semi-delusion, which, not improbably, is a true one, it is the part of sound criticism in each particular instance to consider whether that theory can best account for the facts of the case.\*

May-Sept.  
1816.

A still stranger incident is said to have occurred on the eve of Shelley's departure for the Continent. Here Medwin is our informant, and the story related to him by Shelley was received by him in all good faith, was apparently credited by Byron, and was to some extent confirmed by the testimony of Miss Clairmont. The night before Shelley set forth for Dover he received a visit in London, says Medwin, from a married lady, "young, handsome, and of noble connections," whose name, known to Medwin, was withheld by him from publication, but "whose disappearance," he observes, "from the world of fashion, in which she moved, may furnish to those curious in such inquiries a clue to her identity." She had long known Shelley, she declared, as the creator of "Queen Mab;" she had entered enthusiastically into his ideas and aspirations; she had dreamed of him by night and by day; and now, after vain struggles with herself, she had come to renounce her name, her fame, her family and friends, to lay her fortunes at his feet and follow him throughout the world. It was Shelley's task, according to the reporter of the strange story, to explain to this rash admirer that another already possessed his heart, with whom, for weal and woe, his life was bound up; and to do this in words which should carry in them as little pain as might be to a woman's pride and love and shame. We shall hear once more of this lady, when she reappears, veiled and nameless as now, during Shelley's days at Naples, where she was seen by Miss Clairmont—if we may credit Miss Clairmont's statement—and where, to close the romantic tale, she

\* It should also be considered whether Shelley was not playing with his faculty of impromptu romancing for Peacock's benefit, the "hoax" being the favourite form of Shelleyan jest in early years; e.g. the "Fragments of Margaret Nicholson," and Shelley's letters on theological difficulties addressed to eminent divines.

died. We may not over-hastily charge Medwin or Shelley with the creation of a myth. Experience of life, with its curiosities of passion, widens the bounds of primitive belief, until at times one thinks that the impossible alone deserves implicit credence. CHAP. I.  
May-Sept.  
1816.

In the opening days of May, 1816, Shelley, accompanied by Mary and Clara Clairmont, started for Paris *en route* to Geneva. Of Miss Clairmont's history, during the interval between the summer of 1815, when she resided in the jasmine and honeysuckle embowered cottage at Lynmouth, and her departure with Shelley and Mary for the Continent, few traces can be recovered. That she again became an inmate of Shelley's home seems probable, for in Godwin's diary we find an entry of New Year's Day, 1816: "Write to P. B. S. inviting Jane" (Godwin and her mother had not adopted the romantic name Clara or Claire, which Jane preferred). In compliance with that invitation Clara came and slept for three nights in Skinner Street; and from later entries in the same diary it is certain that now and again during the early months of the year she visited London, and dined or slept at home. It was the time when Byron's brief union with his wife, its brighter hours gone by, was darkening to its close. A little after the second statement made by Lady Byron to Dr. Lushington had determined her adviser to pronounce reconciliation with her husband impossible, Clara Clairmont was tasting an intoxicating excitement, which was to fill all her future life with wormwood and gall—a bitterness growing ever more bitter to the last days of her existence. She called on Byron, we are told, knowing him to be of influence at Drury Lane, and hoping by his assistance to secure a theatrical engagement. Clara Clairmont was unhappy and unknown; of little experience—a girl in her eighteenth year. Byron, already the most famous poet of England, was a man of twenty-eight, who had learnt the havoc wrought by intemperate passion, and was skilled in the dangers which beset a woman's heart.



CHAP. I. But Clara had a beauty and brilliance of her own; and why should a man of genius set bounds to his appetite for delighted sensations? To Clara the rapture was a blinding one—to know herself beloved of the most extraordinary genius, the highest singer, the most romantic and most famous person of the time; one whom the world had misunderstood, who had wrongs and griefs and a lacerated heart, to which she might bring healing. What was the marriage-tie to one who had of late been a student in the school of “Political Justice” and “Queen Mab”? It is not strange that a girl of excitable temperament, unbalanced judgment, and intellect imbued with the social doctrines of revolutionary thinkers, should have been lightly whirled out of her regular orbit by such a force as that of Byron. When the sons of God were wont to descend to the daughters of men, who could rightly wonder if Aholibamah stood on watch for Samiasa, kindling the west like a returning sunset, or uttered the proud retort to her trembling companion—

“And where is the impiety of loving  
Celestial natures?”

That her own friends and kinsfolk would view with disapproval her connection with Byron was at once perceived by Clara; and she eagerly desired to keep the great event of her life a secret. A letter in her handwriting, written, one would surmise from certain expressions in it, just before Byron's departure from England, warns her lover that Mary was profoundly ignorant of the nature of their intimacy; she did not so much as know that Byron was acquainted with Miss Clairmont's name.\* On April 25 of that year, Byron, for the last time in his life, gazed at the lessening cliffs of England, as he sailed away from Dover towards Ostend. In his coach, unwieldy through its luxury, attended by three men-servants and his young companion and physician Polidori, he travelled

\* See Mr. Froude's article, “A Leaf from the Real Life of Lord Byron,” in the *Nineteenth Century*, August, 1883. I can confirm Mr. Froude's statement.

through Flanders and by the Rhine towards Geneva. For CHAP. I.  
 English poetry the journey was made memorable by its May-Sept.  
1816.  
 splendid, imaginative record in the third canto of "Childe Harold." Towards Geneva also, by the Paris route and with greater celerity, were advancing Shelley and Mary, with their little blue-eyed boy. Clara Clairmont accompanied them, and took credit to herself for having determined Shelley to travel abroad, now that business did not keep him in England. The company of her fellow-travellers was indeed irksome to her, but it was inevitable. If Byron should communicate with her through the Geneva *poste restante* he must address his letters to her under a feigned name. That Shelley had decided to leave England, independently of Clara's solicitations, we know for certain; it is not improbable, however, that her desire to visit Geneva may have hastened his departure, and may have helped to determine his destination.

From Dover Shelley addressed a farewell letter to Godwin, in which his natural kindness and gentleness of temper find expression. It sets forth the motives of his voluntary exile, as far as he was disposed to explain them to Godwin.

*Shelley to Godwin.*

Dover, May 3, 1816.

No doubt you are anxious to hear the state of my concerns. I wish that it was in my power to give you a more favourable view of them than such as I am compelled to present. The limited condition of my fortune is regretted by me, as I imagine you well know, because among other designs of a similar nature I cannot at once put you in possession of all that would be sufficient for the comfort and independence which it is so unjust that you should not have already received from society.

Chancery has decided that I and my father may not touch the estates. It has decided also that all the timber, worth, it is said, £60,000, must be cut and sold, and the money paid into court to abide *whatever equities* may hereafter arise. This you already know from Fanny.

All this reduces me very nearly to the situation I described to

CHAP. I. you in March, so far as relates to your share in the question. I  
 May-Sept. shall receive nothing from my father except in the way of charity.  
 1816. Post-obit concerns are very doubtful, and annuity transactions are confined within an obvious and very narrow limit.

My father is to advance me a sum to meet, as I have alleged, engagements contracted during the dependence of the late negotiation. This sum is extremely small, and is swallowed up almost in such of my debts and the liquidation of such securities as I have been compelled to state in order to obtain the money at all. A few hundred pounds will remain; you shall have £300 from this source in the course of the summer. I am to give a post-obit security for this sum, and the affair at present stands that the deeds are to be drawn in the course of six weeks or two months, and that I am to return for their signature, and to receive the money. There can be no doubt that, if my applications in other quarters should not be discovered by my father, the money will be in readiness for you by the time that Kingdom's discounts recur.

I am afraid nothing can be done with Bryant. He promised to lend me £500 on *my mere bond*; of course he failed, and this failure presents no good augury of his future performances. Still the negotiation is open, and I cannot but think that the only, or at least the best, chance for success would be your interference. Perhaps you would dislike to be mistaken for my personal friend, which it would be necessary you should appear, provided you acquiesce in this suggestion. I am confident that it would be a most favourable circumstance. It is necessary, I must remark, that secrecy should at present be observed.

Hayward has also an affair in hand. He says he thinks he can get me £300 on post-obit.

Neither Bryant nor Hayward know that I have left England, and as I must in all probability, nay certainly, return in a few weeks to sign these deeds, if the people should agree, or at least to get the money from my father, I thought it might relax their exertions to know that I was abroad. I informed them that I was gone for a fortnight or three weeks into the country. I have not even disengaged my lodgings in Marchmont Street.

The motives which determined me to leave England, and which I stated to you in a former letter, have continued since that period to press on me with accumulated force. Continually detained in a situation where what I esteem a prejudice does not permit me to

live on equal terms with my fellow-beings, I resolved to commit CHAP. I. myself to a decided step. I therefore take Mary to Geneva, where I shall devise some plan of settlement, and only leave her to return May-Sept. to London, and exclusively devote myself to business. 1816.

I leave England, I know not, perhaps for ever. I return, alone, to see no friend, to do no office of friendship, to engage in nothing that can soothe the sentiments of regret almost like remorse, which, under such circumstances, every one feels who quits his native land. I respect you, I think well of you, better perhaps than of any other person whom England contains; you were the philosopher who first awakened, and who still as a philosopher to a very great degree regulates, my understanding. It is unfortunate for me that the part of your character which is least excellent should have been met by my convictions of what was right to do. But I have been too indignant, I have been unjust to you—forgive me—burn those letters which contain the records of my violence, and believe that however what you erroneously call fame and honour separate us, I shall always feel towards you as the most affectionate of friends.

P. B. SHELLEY.

*Address—Poste Restante, Geneva.*

I have written in great haste, expecting every moment to hear that the Pacquet sails.

On May 8, Shelley, Mary, and Clara were in Paris for the second time, more desolate than on the former occasion, without a friend in the wide city, and vexatiously delayed by the necessity of obtaining signatures to passports. It seemed to the travellers that the natural brightness and amiability of French manners had altered under the rule of a rejected dynasty upheld by foreign bayonets—"the discontent and sullenness of their mind perpetually betrays itself." From Paris, as far as Troyes, their road was that which they had traversed two years since on foot and mule-back. Thence onwards through Dijon and Dôle they advanced towards the Jura range, arriving, by the light of a stormy moon, on the fourth night after leaving Paris, at the little mountain village of Champagnolle. "The road was serpentine and exceedingly

CHAP. I. steep, and was overhung on one side by half-distinguished precipices, whilst the other was a gulf, filled by the darkness of the driving clouds. The dashing of the invisible mountain streams announced to us that we had quitted the plains of France." \* Next day, winding in chill air among ravines overhung by pine-forests, or climbing amid the snows which still gathered in the tardy spring, they passed the village of Les Rousses, and, with the aid of a team of four horses and ten men to support the carriage, pushed on through pelting snow-flakes to the neighbourhood of Geneva. Huge pines, rising in clumps from the white wilderness, looked weird in the twilight, and the wide silence of the desert was broken only by the calls and clamour of their labouring mountaineers.

With the new morning the world was changed for them. From the windows of their hotel—Dejean's Hôtel de l'Angleterre—at Sécheron, a small suburb of Geneva, on the northern side of the lake, they looked out upon the blue waters sparkling in the sunshine. All was warmth and animation and the beauty of cultured landscape, save in the distance the black mountain ridges and the remoter gleaming of Mont Blanc.† A delighted glow of pleasure ran along their veins, and animated their thoughts and words. "We have not yet found out any agreeable walks," wrote Mary on May 17; "but you know our attachment to water-excursions. We have hired a boat, and every evening at about six o'clock we sail on the lake, which is delightful, whether we glide over a glassy surface or are speeded along by a strong wind. The waves of this lake never afflict me with that sickness that deprives me of all enjoyment in a sea-voyage; on the contrary, the tossing of our boat raises my spirits and inspires me with unusual

\* Letter of Mrs. Shelley in her "History of a Six Weeks' Tour, etc.," embodying part of Shelley's letter to Peacock of May 15, 1816.

† From Mrs. Shelley's letters printed in the "Six Weeks' Tour," we gather that they left Paris on May 10, and reached Geneva on the 15th. I have some reason for believing that an error may have occurred in the dates; that they reached Paris on the 6th, left it on the 8th, and reached Geneva on the 13th of May. Shelley's first letter from Geneva is dated the 15th.

hilarity. Twilight here is of short duration, but we at present CHAP. I. enjoy the benefit of an increasing moon, and seldom return May-Sept. until ten o'clock, when, as we approach the shore, we are 1816. saluted by the delightful scent of flowers and new-mown grass, and the chirp of the grasshoppers, and the song of the evening birds.

"We do not enter into society here, but yet our time passes swiftly and delightfully. We read Latin and Italian during the heats of noon, and when the sun declines we walk in the garden of the hotel, looking at the rabbits, relieving fallen cockchafers, and watching the motions of a myriad of lizards who inhabit a southern wall of the garden. You know that we have just escaped from the gloom of winter and of London, and coming to this delightful spot during this divine weather, I feel as happy as a new-fledged bird, and hardly care what twig I fly to, so that I may try my new-found wings. A more experienced bird may be more difficult in its choice of a bower; but in my present temper of mind, the budding flowers, the fresh grass of spring, and the happy creatures about me that live and enjoy these pleasures, are quite enough to afford me exquisite delight, even though clouds should shut out Mont Blanc from my sight."

On Saturday, May 25, about ten days after Shelley's arrival, there was bustle at Dejean's, and Clara's heart must have moved quick, for Byron had entered the hotel. Byron's writings were well known to Shelley, but he had not as yet made the personal acquaintance of his great contemporary. To Byron he had sent, long since, a copy of "Queen Mab," with a letter setting forth in detail the accusations brought against himself, and adding that, if Byron discredited these accusations, it would make him happy to be honoured with his lordship's acquaintance. The poem reached Byron, and its opening lines won his admiration; the singular letter miscarried.\* At

\* Such is Moore's statement. Medwin represents Shelley as writing a letter to the same effect on Byron's arrival at Geneva. Probably Medwin wrote from

CHAP. I. the Sécheron hotel they were naturally and inevitably drawn together; both were poets; both were children of the Revolution, the one representing its temper of indignant revolt; the other, its doctrinal evangel and its wild-eyed hopes; both had warred against the laws of society, and were rebels under the ban. The mass and momentum of Byron's genius in its impact with the mind of Shelley had an effect like that of a planet sheering its way through the luminous mist of a comet in flight. At times an overpowering sense of his own slowness and impotence subdued Shelley; and having a gift for admiration, he effaced himself in homage to the power exerted by Byron with so much ease and with so vast an effect. Yet from the first he was sensible of the coarser elements in Byron's composition. "Lord Byron," he wrote from Geneva, "is an exceedingly interesting person; and as such, is it not to be regretted that he is a slave to the vilest and most vulgar prejudices, and as mad as the winds?"\* And when Shelley recovered somewhat from the delighted astonishment called forth in him by Byron's creative energy, he must have felt that there is a nobler and longer career for the art inspired and sustained by love than for that in which egotism, and pride, and wrath, and cynical disbelief mingle with its purer substance. Count Maddalo is indeed "a person of most consummate genius," but "it is his weakness to be proud." Julian is far less of a domineering power over men; far more of a speculator and a dreamer; but in this very fact lies an influence as yet undeveloped, for his faith is in ideas which have a great future before them, and his speculations are for ever as to how good may be made superior to the evil in this world.†

an imperfect recollection of Moore's statement; but what accusations were brought against Shelley in 1813, when "Queen Mab" was printed? Perhaps it was not sent until later.

\* To Peacock, July 17, 1816.

† Preface to "Julian and Maddalo," Shelley contrasting his own character with that of Byron.

To be near water was with Shelley to long for a boat, and CHAP. I.  
 a boat, keeled and clinker-built, was found, which became the May-Sept.  
 joint property of himself and Byron. Evening after evening 1816.  
 of late May and early June, they embarked, with Mary and Clara in their company, and Polidori, the young Anglo-Italian, with his handsome southern outline of face and his melancholy air; and before they would again touch shore the dew was falling and the moon had come forth in the heavens. Or they would land for a walk, Byron loitering behind, "lazily trailing his sword-stick along, and moulding, as he went, his thronging thoughts into shape." Often, when in the boat, says Moore, he would lean abstractedly over the side, surrendering himself up to the feelings and images which were to be embodied in his verse. These evenings were the inspiration of some of the most admirable stanzas of that canto of "Childe Harold" which was written at Geneva—

"There breathes a living fragrance from the shore  
 Of flowers yet fresh with childhood; on the ear  
 Drops the light drip of the suspended oar,  
 Or chirps the grasshopper one good-night carol more."

One evening, while their rowers struggled against tide and wind, Byron, animated by the contest of man with nature, mingled his voice with that of the wild north-east. "'I will sing you an Albanian song,' he cried; 'now, be sentimental and give me all your attention.' It was a strange, wild howl that he gave forth; but such as, he declared, was an exact imitation of the savage Albanian mode—laughing the while," writes Mrs. Shelley, "at our disappointment, who had expected a wild Eastern melody." Perhaps it was after this evening that Byron was re-named, by Shelley and his companions, the "Albaneser," or oftener in a more familiar form as Albè.\*

\* I think I am not wrong in naming Mrs. Shelley as Moore's informant who gave him this anecdote. Mr. Forman suggests that the name "Albè" was formed from the initials *L. B.* = *Lord Byron*. Perhaps this is the true explanation. I find "the Albaneser" occurring in a letter from Shelley to his wife written from Venice, August 23, 1818.



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Finding, probably, the cost of living at a hotel excessive, and looking forward to a residence of some months in the neighbourhood of Geneva, Shelley, with Mary and Clara and little William, moved by the end of May from Sécheron to a cottage, known as Campagne Chapuis or Campagne Mont Alègre, about two miles from the city, near Coligny, on the opposite side of the lake. The cottage, separated from the water's edge only by a small garden overgrown by trees, stood some five or eight minutes' walk below the Villa Diodati, where Milton, returning from Italy in 1639, had visited his friend Dr. John Diodati, the Genevan professor of theology. A vineyard lay between the villa and Shelley's cottage, with a narrow winding lane leading from the upper house to the terrace and little harbour where lay the boat at her moorings. "The spot," writes Medwin, who visited it in 1818, "was one of the most sequestered on the lake, and almost hidden by a grove of umbrageous forest trees, as is a bird's nest among leaves." From this southern shore of the lake Mont Blanc and his snowy *aiguilles* were invisible, but Jura, northwards, made amends, behind whose range the sun sank, while darkness winged onward along the valley, from the Alps still glowing and roseate in the sunset glamour. Haunted and hunted by the British tourist and gossip-monger, Byron took refuge on June 10 at the Villa Diodati;\* but still the pursuers strove to win some wretched consolation by waylaying him in his evening drives, or directing the telescope upon his balcony, which overlooked the lake, or upon the hillside, with its vineyard, where he lurked obscure.

As springtime passed into full summer the weather broke; but the Alps and Jura tell only half their wonders to one who sees them under a cloudless sky. To watch the long lances

\* It seems pretty clearly made out by the Hon. J. L. Warren (*Notes and Queries*, 5th ser., vol. viii.) that there was only one migration from the hotel, Shelley going direct to Maison or Campagne Chapuis, known also as Mont Alègre, and Byron going to the Campagne Diodati, to which, or to the neighbourhood, the name Belle Rive was also applied.

of the rain marching across the hills, and the marshalling and CHAP. I. meeting and sundering of the clouds, to hear every mountain May-Sept. answer to the thunder, was a compensation for days all blue 1816. and golden. "One night," wrote Mrs. Shelley, "we *enjoyed* a finer storm than I had ever before beheld. The lake was lit up, the pines on Jura made visible, and all the scene illuminated for an instant, when a pitchy blackness succeeded, and the thunder came in frightful bursts over our heads amid the darkness." It was such thunder as echoes still in certain well-known and over-lauded stanzas of "Childe Harold." After tempest, the hour of calm and sunshine was felt more deeply, more exquisitely. "We have latterly enjoyed fine weather," Mary wrote, "and nothing is more pleasant than to listen to the evening song of the vine-dressers. They are all women, and most of them have harmonious although masculine voices. The theme of their ballads consists of shepherds, love, flocks, and the sons of kings who fall in love with beautiful shepherdesses. Their tunes are monotonous, but it is sweet to hear them in the stillness of evening, while we are enjoying the sight of the setting sun, either from the hill behind our house or from the lake."

When the evenings were fine, the boat was never allowed to rock idly in its bay. Before Byron's migration from Sécheron, he would cross the lake to visit his friends at Mont Alègre, and as he returned over the darkened waters, says Mrs. Shelley, "the wind from far across bore us his voice," singing a Tyrolean song of liberty by Moore. On his arrival at Diodati, Shelley was his constant companion upon the water. To feel the lapping of the waves about him, and to gaze into the sky above—to live between two wonderful worlds, the waters beneath, the heavens overhead—was for Shelley an emancipation from all cramping anxieties and memories of pain. He was in the habit, said Maurice, the boatman, "of lying down at the bottom of the vessel, and gazing at heaven, where he would never enter." As June went by, the voyagers

CHAP. I. conceived the happy project of circumnavigating the lake, and  
 May-Sept. 1816. on the afternoon of the 23rd, in windless weather, their boat  
 drew off from the little port of Mont Alègre, bound on this  
 ambitious voyage. Luckily Polidori, having sprained his  
 ankle, was left behind, though he grumbled at the wrong that  
 was done him. Byron's young physician was not pre-eminent  
 for good temper or good sense; in his vanity he would be a  
 tragic poet, and earned his patron's sarcasms or ironical  
 applause by his attempt. "After all," said Polidori to Byron,  
 "what is there you can do that I cannot?" "Three things,"  
 replied Byron. "I can swim across that river, I can snuff out  
 that candle with a pistol shot at the distance of twenty paces,  
 and I have written a poem of which fourteen thousand copies  
 were sold in one day." \* Towards Shelley the doctor's feeling  
 was a constantly self-vexing jealousy, and on one occasion,  
 suffering from the cruel wrong of having been loser in a sail-  
 ing-match, he went so far as to send Shelley a challenge, which  
 was received with a fit of becoming laughter. "Recollect,"  
 said Byron, "that though Shelley has some scruples about  
 duelling, *I* have none; and shall be, at all times, ready to take  
 his place." Polidori, who afterwards put an end to his life, on  
 such occasions would retire in mortification to his room, there  
 to pestle his poisons, pursuing "conclusions infinite of easy  
 ways to die."

Coasting the southern margin of the lake, the voyagers  
 reached at sunset the little village of Nernier, and gazed forth  
 from the shore upon "purple and misty waters broken by  
 the craggy islets." While the evening shadows gathered,  
 Byron and Shelley sat upon a wall beside the lake and  
 watched the village boys at play, most of them deformed with  
 the goitre, but one little fellow of such exquisite grace and  
 beauty, that he became to their imagination as did the girl

\* Another version is that of Edward Williams's journal: "Three things that  
 Byron would do which Polidori could not do—hit the key-hole with a pistol, swim  
 across the river, and give Polidori a d—d good thrashing."

of Inversnaid to Wordsworth's, "like something fashioned in a CHAP. I. dream," a vision which yet claimed blessing from a human heart. Next day, as their boat advanced eastwards, the snowy summits of the mountains of Savoy, with pine forest, and groves of walnut and oak and lawny fields, ennobled the prospect. The weather was changeful, with fits of wilfulness and fine caprice—now with thunder-showers and baffling breezes, now with a warm southern gust, the summer clouds upon the peaks and deep chasms of blue between. At mid-day, on June 25, blown by a rising gale, they reached enchanted ground, where Rousseau was the magician, and Julie and Saint-Preux spirits which his art evoked. Having dined at Meillerie, and tasted its honey, "the very essence of the mountain flowers and as fragrant," they re-embarked, and scudded in a south-easterly direction under a single sail, amid breaking waves and a chaos of whirling foam. "One of our boatmen," writes Shelley, "who was a dreadfully stupid fellow, persisted in holding the sail at a time when the boat was on the point of being driven under water by the hurricane. On discovering his error, he let it entirely go, and the boat for a moment refused to obey the helm; in addition, the rudder was so broken as to render the management of it very difficult; one wave fell in and then another. My companion [Byron], an excellent swimmer, took off his coat; I did the same, and we sat with our arms crossed, every instant expecting to be swamped. The sail was, however, again held, the boat obeyed the helm, and, still in imminent peril from the immensity of the waves, we arrived in a few minutes at a sheltered port, in the village of St. Gingoux. I felt in this near prospect of death a mixture of sensations, among which terror entered, though but subordinately. My feelings would have been less painful had I been alone; but I knew that my companion would have attempted to save me, and I was overcome with humiliation when I thought that his life might have been risked to preserve mine."

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On that day there was no further sailing. Having driven to the point where the Rhone joins the lake, amid scenery of surpassing beauty, they returned to St. Gingoux before sunset. Shelley's evening passed in reading the letters of Saint Preux, who, with Julie, had encountered like perils to his own, almost at the selfsame spot. "It would have been very classical to have been lost there," said Byron afterwards to Medwin, "but not so agreeable." With early morning of June 26, while his companion still lay drowsing, Shelley was up and abroad among slant meadows and caverned rocks, "to hunt the waterfalls." \* "I gathered in these meadows," he writes, "a nosegay of such flowers as I never saw in England, and which I thought more beautiful for that rarity." A few hours later they were inspecting the dungeons of Chillon, a most terrible monument—as they appeared to Shelley—of that cold and inhuman tyranny which man delights to exercise over man. Thence, through a heavy swell, they advanced to Clarens—a visit commemorated in stanzas of "Childe Harold," which condense into a few ardent verses the very spirit of Rousseau. "I read 'Julie' all day," says Shelley, "an overflowing, as it now seems, surrounded by the scenes which it has so wonderfully peopled, of sublimest genius and more than human sensibility." Under the trees of the "bosquet de Julie" haymakers were busy. With difficulty Shelley restrained tears of melancholy transport which it would have been sweet to indulge. This was indeed Julia's wood. The little chapel had, however, been levelled by orders of the monks of St. Bernard, to whom the land belonged. Much as avarice may tend to harden the heart—such was Shelley's reflection—"a system of prescriptive religion has an influence far more inimical to natural sensibility." From Clarens to Vevai, beautiful in its simplicity, from Vevai to Ouchy, completed the tour of the most interesting portion of the lake.

\* "To hunt the waterfalls," Shelley's expression, is, of course, a reminiscence from Wordsworth's "Louisa."

During two days at Ouchy the rain fell; but the travellers found opportunity to visit Lausanne and see the house where Gibbon, in view of Mont Blanc, brought his great history to a close. "My companion gathered some acacia leaves to preserve in remembrance of him. I refrained from doing so, fearing to outrage the greater and more sacred name of Rousseau." The heart-beats of Julie seemed of more import at this moment to Shelley than the giant death-throes of the Roman empire. "On Saturday the 30th of June," so closes Shelley's record of the lake-voyage, "we quitted Ouchy, and after two days of pleasant sailing arrived on Sunday evening at Montalegre." CHAP. I.  
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While detained by stress of weather in the little inn at Ouchy, Byron, who the day before had traced the footstep-marks of Bonnivard in his dungeon, wrote with swift, sure strokes, "The Prisoner of Chillon." The stanzas on Clarens and Rousseau in the third canto of "Childe Harold" were also probably written under the immediate impression of the scenes described; for from Ouchy Byron wrote to Murray, informing him of the completion of the canto, and giving the number—only one less than were actually published—of its stanzas.\* Shelley's creative power lay for the time in abeyance, but it has been generally acknowledged that something of his influence and inspiration can be discerned or felt in Byron's poetry of the Genevan sojourn. Apart, indeed, from Shelley's influence, Byron, in 1816, was roused to a higher mood and temper than were his when the earlier cantos of the poem of wandering had been written. In place of shadowy griefs, vague ennui, and half-affected spleen, had come a real disaster, and an actual warfare with the world. He threw himself for consolation on the breast of nature, and into sympathy with human suffering in the person of the martyr

\* The manuscript note, "Begun July 10, 1816: Diodati, near Lake of Geneva," ought probably to be "*June 10*," on which day, as Polidori's diary shows, Byron moved to Diodati. The canto seems to have been completed on July 4.

CHAP. I. of Chillon. Mingled with what was pseudo-romantic or pseudo-dramatic, there was in Byron's higher poetry of this period an unusual proportion of what was of genuine poetic origin. "I was half-mad during the time of its composition," he wrote concerning the third canto of "Childe Harold," "between metaphysics, mountains, love inextinguishable, thoughts unutterable, and the nightmare of my own delinquencies." \* Upon this turmoil of conflicting passions Shelley's influence fell with spiritualizing power, and through it Byron was touched by the influence of Wordsworth; or rather, alike through Wordsworth and Shelley, and through hills and lake and sky, the breathing of the great Parent,

"Mother of this unfathomable world,"

modulated Byron's song, elevating it with a natural piety, marred indeed by his characteristic egotism, yet purer and more refined than hitherto he had expressed or felt.

Shelley during his lake-voyage, as far as we are aware, wrote no poetry; but his mind was open to every appeal of beauty or sublimity. And hence it is noteworthy that he could detach his mind from the exquisite delight of his immediate surroundings to address a prosaic business letter to Godwin, with a view to lighten the burden of his ever-present distress. Godwin's complaints at his departure from England had pursued Shelley to the Genevan solitude. From his tour to Scotland and the English lakes Godwin had returned to London on the very day after Shelley's departure for the Continent. Everything in his affairs depended, as he believed, on despatch, and now there must be slow and uncertain communications between London and Geneva. A client of the solicitor to whom Shelley had referred Godwin, as likely to assist in obtaining money, offered to purchase the reversion of

\* Miss Clairmont has left a remarkable statement respecting a confession of his delinquencies, made by Byron at Geneva in her presence, which Shelley at the time believed to be a piece of morbid boasting of unreal wickedness. Miss Clairmont herself, late in life, thought that Shelley might be right.

a farm from Shelley for the sum of seventeen hundred pounds; CHAP. I. but no progress in the negotiation could be made without a May-Sept. copy of the settlement of 1791, and Shelley was not on the 1816. spot to procure it. "This," wrote Godwin, "is the first fruits of your unfortunate absence. Bryant says that he can find you purchasers for other things." On the evening of the second day of the excursion, the voyagers rested at the little town of Evian, whence Shelley found time to write as follows:—

*Shelley to Godwin.*

Evian, Savoie, June 23, 1816.\*

Your letter reached me the moment before I set off on a little tour of the borders of the lake. I write this [reply †] from the first post-town I arrive at.

You know that we are not on those intimate terms as to permit that I should have minutely explained to you the motives which determined my departure, or that, if explained, you would have judged them with the judgment of a friend. I can easily imagine that you were disquieted by it. But I have ever been most unwillingly the cause of disquiet to you, meaning you all possible good.

I entirely approve of your seeing Bryant, and I think, if no unappreciated circumstances render the farm in question more valuable than he states, that the terms his client offers are unusually favourable. But I think if you undertake the business, you ought to ascertain this. The property need not actually be valued, as the expense of valuation is proportionally immense, but a clearer conception of its value than the purchaser's assertion or even the rental affords, might, I should conceive, be obtained by one so clear-sighted and experienced in these affairs as yourself. But perhaps I am unjust to you to suppose that you would not in all these respects consider my property as your own.

There is a copy of the settlement, as I imagine, at Jew King's, which he said he would sell for ten pounds. Enclosed is a note, which, as probably it is inconvenient to you to pay this sum, directs my bankers to give as much to *Mr. Martin*. I have put

\* Either this date ought to be June 24, or the lake-voyage began on the 22nd, instead of the 23rd, as stated in the "Six Weeks' Tour," etc.

† I am not certain as to the word of the manuscript.



CHAP. I. this name, supposing that you would not like your own to be  
 May-Sept. 1816. stated. I dare say you can get the settlement for £5, if, as I  
 strongly believe, it is yet in King's possession. If it is not, I can  
 think of no other resource than Longdill, from whom I conceive  
 that a copy might be obtained on the ground of your having on a  
 former occasion lent me a copy, and my not having returned it,  
 and his having collected all the copies belonging to me, and the  
 person to whom this copy belongs having a right to it. You  
 remember that you borrowed what I now speak of from a law  
 student, that you lent it to me, and that it never was returned.

In the present state of the negotiations with Bryant the utmost  
 care must be taken that no circumstance relating to it transpires.  
 I hope that you were impressed with the necessity of secrecy on  
 this point. Nothing but my persuasion that you will act as if  
 you were, engages my consent to the negotiation.

May I request if you obtain the settlement that you will cause  
 a copy to be made and keep it for me?

The style of this letter, I fear, will appear to you unusual.  
 The truth is that I feel the unbounded difficulty of making myself  
 understood on the commonest topic, and I am obliged to adopt for  
 that purpose a cold and stiff set of phrases. No person can feel  
 deeper interest for another, or venerate their character and talents  
 more sincerely, or regret more incessantly his own impotent lone-  
 liness, than I for you and yours.

Remember me kindly to Fanny both for her own and for her  
 sister's sake.

P. B. SHELLEY.

Address still Geneva. I shall have returned in a few days  
 from this date.

"Remember me kindly to Fanny both for her own and for  
 her sister's sake"—thus Shelley sent his friendly greeting to  
 the gentle girl whose spirits had been failing during the early  
 months of this year, and whose heart was at times full of a  
 despairing sense of her own uselessness in the world—full also  
 of vague alarms and terrors for her future, and the future of  
 those to whom she was attached by duty or affection. The  
 short business letter from Godwin which Shelley received  
 just before starting on his circuit of the lake, left a blank

space in the sheet for Fanny to fill with news from home. CHAP. I.  
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Mrs. Godwin had attempted to poison Fanny's affection for her sister by representing her as the constant butt and laughing-stock of Mary and Shelley, by whom, in truth, she was held in deep regard. And some words of Mary at their parting, which seemed to Fanny to cast doubts on the disinterestedness of her love, lent colour to Mrs. Godwin's representations. But Fanny's sweetness of disposition saved her from any feeling save that of sorrow that she should be thus misunderstood.

*From Fanny Godwin.*

Wednesday, May 29, 1816.

MY DEAR MARY AND SHELLEY,

Papa has given to me this space of paper to fill and seal. I received Mary's letter on Monday morning. I can assure you it was very precious to me. France is in so strange a state that I could not feel easy for your safety till I heard that you had actually arrived. I feared that you would have found it very cold; in England it has been most dreadfully dreary and rainy; but if you have not suffered any permanent injury, it will be an adventure to look back upon with pleasure.

I wrote you a long letter about a fortnight since, which I hope you have by this time received. In it I told you that Papa had come home quite well, and quite a new man. He has been busy since to raise money, but I do not choose to interfere further than I am obliged by him. I can never understand these affairs, and therefore I can only do harm by mentioning them.

My feelings and tone of mind have undergone a considerable revolution for the better since I last wrote to you. I have unexpectedly seen Mr. Blood, brother of Fanny Blood,\* my Mother's friend. Everything he has told me of my Mother has increased my love and admiration of her memory. He has given me many particulars of the days of his youth and serene life. George Blood seems to have loved and venerated her as a superior being; to have been most devotedly attached to her memory ever since her

\* Fanny Blood, the friend of Mary Wollstonecraft, married a Mr. Skeys, and from Lisbon wrote to Mary, entreating her friend to be with her during her confinement. Mary arrived only to nurse her friend in her last hours, and returned almost broken-hearted (Mr. C. Kegan Paul's "William Godwin," i. 177).]

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death, and to have ventured to hope that her daughters were not unworthy of her. This has in some degree roused me from my torpor. I have determined never to live to be a disgrace to such a Mother. I have found that if I will endeavour to overcome my faults, I shall find beings to love and esteem me. George Blood is not a man of superior intellect, but has great warmth of feeling and great goodness of heart. The manner in which he has spoken of my Mother has been a great balm to my heart, and has endeared him much to me. He had not been in London for twenty-six years, and our Mother then bid him adieu at the coach-door. He also met her at Lisbon, at the time of Fanny Blood's death. I have not room or time to tell you more particulars. I will write, or tell Shelley, when I see him, everything.\* I believe, however, that I shall go to Ireland instead of to France, at least for a short time. Mary gave a great deal of pain the day I parted from you. Believe, my dear friends, that my attachment to you has grown out of your individual worth and talents; and perhaps also because I found the world deserted you, I loved you the more. Whatever faults I may have, I am not sordid or vulgar. I love you for *yourselves alone*. I endeavour to be as frank to you as possible, that you may understand my real character. I understand from Mamma that I am your laughing-stock and the constant beacon of your satire. I am very glad to hear that little William is so much improved; kiss him again and again for me. I hope that there is a letter upon the road for me ere this. I wish Papa had not begun this letter, it is so cold; when, I can assure you, he speaks of you with great kindness and interest. I hope the day will not be long ere you are reconciled.

I have been obliged to write in great haste. Remember me to Jane, and believe me your affectionately attached friend,

FANNY.

On resuming residence at Mont Alègre and Diodati, Shelley and Byron resumed the ways of life which had been interrupted by their excursion round the lake. To read, to write, to go abroad in the boat together or alone, to meet at Diodati in the evening for talk prolonged far into the night—such was the constantly repeated round. While Shelley and Byron

\* Shelley was expected in England, to sign certain documents and receive certain moneys from his father.

maintained the nightly debate, Mary, with her clear hazel CHAP. I.  
 eyes and great placid brow, would look on and listen, pene- May-Sept.  
 trated to the heart by their words and the sound of the alter- 1816.  
 nate voices. Afterwards, when Shelley's voice was for ever  
 silent, the voice of Byron would fill her with melancholy by  
 the demand which it seemed to make for that other which her  
 heart must listen for henceforth in vain. "I do not think that  
 any person's voice," she wrote in her journal for October 19  
 1822, "has the same power of awakening melancholy in me  
 as Albè's. I have been accustomed, when hearing it, to listen  
 and speak little; another's voice, not mine, ever replied—a  
 voice whose strings are broken. When Albè ceases to speak,  
 I expect to hear *that other* voice, and when I hear another  
 instead it jars strangely with every association. I have seen  
 so little of Albè since our residence in Switzerland, and,  
 having seen him there every day, his voice—a peculiar one—is  
 engraved on my memory with other sounds and objects from  
 which it can never disunite itself. . . . Since my incapacity  
 and timidity always prevented my mingling in the nightly  
 conversations of Diodati, they were, as it were, entirely *tête-*  
*à-tête* between my Shelley and Albè; and thus, as I have said,  
 when Albè speaks and Shelley does not answer, it is as  
 thunder without rain—the form of the sun without heat or  
 light—as any familiar object might be, shorn of its best attri-  
 butes; and I listen with an unspeakable melancholy that yet  
 is not all pain."

Yet, amid the delights of lake and mountain, and the  
 strenuous pleasure of intercourse with such a mind as that of  
 Byron, Shelley thought lovingly of England, its greyer skies,  
 its fields, its green lanes, its hills and streams, and the peace  
 of a settled home. He was, indeed, out of sympathy with  
 many English institutions, but he did not scorn or spurn his  
 native land; rather his heart reverted towards it like the  
 heart of a child towards a mother. "So long as man is such  
 as he now is," Shelley had written to Peacock on arriving at

CHAP. I. Geneva, "the experience of which I speak [that gained by  
 May-Sept. 1816. foreign travel] will never teach him to despise the country of  
 his birth--far otherwise, like Wordsworth, he will never know  
 what love subsists between that and him until absence shall  
 have made its beauty more heartfelt; \* our poets and our  
 philosophers, our mountains and our lakes, the rural lanes and  
 fields which are so especially our own, are ties which, until  
 I become utterly senseless, can never be broken asunder." So  
 Shelley had written with the first impression of the beauty of  
 Lake Lemman and the glory of Mont Blanc upon him; and  
 now, after two months abroad, though he did not contemplate  
 an immediate return to England, he felt more strongly that at  
 each remove from his country he should but drag a lengthen-  
 ing chain. He wrote accordingly (July 17) to Peacock--his  
 tenancy of the house at Bishopsgate ceasing on August 3--to  
 look out for a home for him and Mary and little William and  
 the kitten now *en pension*. "I wish you to get an unfurnished  
 house, with as good a garden as may be, near Windsor Forest,  
 and take a lease of it for fourteen or twenty-one years. I  
 wish the situation to resemble as nearly as possible that of  
 Bishopgate, and should think that Sunning Hill, or Winkfield  
 Plain, or the neighbourhood of Virginia Water, would afford  
 some possibilities. . . . My present intention is to return to  
 England, and to make that most excellent of nations my per-  
 petual resting-place. I think it is extremely probable that  
 we shall return next spring--perhaps before, perhaps after,  
 but certainly we shall return." It is remarkable with what  
 a warm glow of domestic feeling Shelley, one of those

"Wanderers o'er Eternity  
 Whose bark drives on and on, and anchor'd ne'er shall be,"

\* Probably Shelley had in his mind Wordsworth's sonnet "Composed by the  
 Seaside near Calais," or that beginning--

"When I have borne in memory what has tamed  
 Great nations"--

which closes with a fond turning of the heart "as of a lover and a child" to his  
 native land.

anticipates the fireside joys. Not Southey himself could have sung a more devout hymn to the household gods. "You must shelter my roofless Penates, dedicate some new temple to them, and perform the functions of a priest in my absence. They are innocent deities, and their worship neither sanguinary nor absurd. Leave Mammon and Jehovah to those who delight in wickedness and slavery—their altars are stained with blood, or polluted with gold, the price of blood. But the shrines of the Penates are good wood fires, or window-frames intertwined with creeping plants; their hymns are the purring of kittens, the hissing of kettles; the long talks over the past and dead; the laugh of children; the warm wind of summer filling the quiet house, and the pelting storm of winter struggling in vain for entrance. In talking of the Penates, will you not liken me to Julius Cæsar dedicating a temple to Liberty?" Beautiful surroundings Shelley desired as an added charm to a fixed abode. Windsor Forest pleased him much "because of the sylvan nature of the place and the beasts with which it was filled;" but he was not insensible to the beauties of the Thames, and if Peacock dwelt at Marlow, it would be a pleasure to reside near his friend. "Recollect, however," he added, in conclusion, "we are now choosing a fixed, settled, eternal home, and as such its internal qualities will affect us more constantly than those which consist in the surrounding scenery, which, whatever it may be at first, will shortly be no more than the colours with which our own habits shall invest it." There is pathos in Shelley's anticipation of that "eternal home," which he never found on earth except near that "slope of green access," with grey walls mouldering around, where his ashes found shelter from the world's wind in the shadow of the tomb.

But before returning to England and "that most excellent of nations," Shelley dreamed of many days upon the wing. The Reuss, the Rhine, the Thames, had left a store of delighted recollections in his brain, of exquisite sensations in his blood,

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CHAP. I. and he longed to be familiar, not alone with the Penates, but  
 May-Sept. 1816. with all the river-gods of Europe, and all Naiads of the tributary brooks. "If possible," he wrote to Peacock, when directing him to look for a house near Windsor Forest, "we think of descending the Danube in a boat, of visiting Constantinople and Athens, then Rome and the Tuscan cities, and returning by the south of France, always following great rivers. The Danube, the Po, the Rhine, and the Garonne; \* rivers are not like roads, the work of the hands of man; they imitate mind, which wanders at will over pathless deserts, and flows through nature's loveliest recesses, which are inaccessible to anything besides. They have the viler advantage also of affording a cheaper mode of conveyance. This eastern scheme is one which has just seized on our imaginations. I fear that the detail of execution will destroy it, as all other wild and beautiful visions." The beautiful vision, indeed, faded quickly away, but the spirit of motion was in Shelley's veins; three days after these words were written, he and Mary and Clara were off and away from the lake-side dwelling, on the road to Chamouni. The impressions which this excursion left with him were widely different from those produced by his sail along the shores of Lake Lemman—all was more savage, solitary, and colossal. The Arve, untamable, swollen by rains and raving among its boulders, the eternal forests, the waterfalls dashing from rock to rock, or assuming shapes like an exhalation, and overhung by a multitude of sunbows, the wild ravines, the pinnacles of snow intolerably bright, which shot into the bright blue sky, the smoke and smothered thunder of the avalanche, the dizzying wonder of the sea of ice—these raised Shelley's spirit to rarer heights of wonder and of joy than it had touched among the flowery meadows of St. Gingoux or in the love-laden atmosphere of Clarens. "I never knew," Shelley writes, "I never imagined, what

\* I leave the punctuation as hitherto printed, though it seems that one might easily amend it.

mountains were before. The immensity of these aerial CHAP. I.  
 summits excited, when they suddenly burst upon the sight, a May-Sept.  
 sentiment of ecstatic wonder, not unallied to madness. . . . 1816.  
 Nature was the poet, whose harmony held our spirits more  
 breathless than that of the divinest." A morning was spent  
 in a visit to the source of the Arveiron; on the next, in spite  
 of rain, the tourists pushed on towards Montanvert, but were  
 at length compelled to return, wet through, with their object  
 unattained. The mule on which Shelley rode falling in a  
*mauvais pas*, he narrowly escaped being precipitated down  
 the mountain; in his descent on foot he tripped, and, falling  
 upon his knee, fainted, and was for a time incapable of con-  
 tinuing his course.

Not to be defeated, they renewed the attempt to view the  
 Mer de Glace from Montanvert on the following day (July  
 25), and this time their effort was rewarded with success.  
 Shining through driving vapours with inexpressible brilliance,  
 the lines of ice rifted in rocky pinnacles seemed to them "like  
 things not belonging to this earth." Below lay the glacier, pre-  
 senting an appearance "as if frost had suddenly bound up the  
 waves and whirlpools of a mighty torrent." For some distance  
 Shelley walked upon the ice, wondering at the horror and  
 beauty and mystery of its blue-green chasms; then the three  
 travellers dined on the grass, in the clear, cold air. "We  
 returned down the mountain, sometimes encompassed by the  
 driving vapours, sometimes cheered by the sunbeams, and  
 arrived at our inn by seven o'clock." Before they left Montan-  
 vert, the Travellers' Album had received in unusual form,  
 but one not to be mistaken, the sign-manual of P. B. Shelley.

"God! let the torrents, like a shout of nations,  
 Answer, and let the ice-plains echo God!"—

so Coleridge had sung in his "Hymn before Sunrise in the Vale  
 of Chamouni." To Shelley the universe itself was the great  
 spiritual Power and Presence, the constant sacred miracle;



CHAP. I. and the fact that the wonder and glory of the universe had here in a special degree exalted his spirit, made him impatient and contemptuous of the conventional pietisms—the small coin of devotion, which the dutiful tourist deposits in the visitors' book as lightly as he leaves a half-franc in the waiter's palm. Shelley's predecessor had exhaled his orthodox sentiment in some devout platitude. The golden opportunity of demonstrating that his heterodoxy stood unsubdued in presence of Mont Blanc was too tempting to be lost by Shelley, and taking the pen, he subscribed his name to Greek words as incorrect in form as in sentiment—

Εἰμι φιλόανθρωπος δημοκράτικος τ' ἄθεος τε.

A third comer, it is said, added the word *μωρός*, and Byron, on visiting Montanvert, defaced Shelley's *atheist* and his successor's *fool*.\*

Deeper feelings than he would expose in a Travellers' Album Shelley put on record in his poem "Mont Blanc," the inspiration of which came to him as he lingered on the bridge

\* In quoting Shelley's inscription, Mr. Rossetti writes, "The spelling, at which Mr. Swinburne expresses the horror of a Hellenist, is copied *literatim*." It was copied by Mr. Swinburne from a leaf of the Travellers' Book bound up with a copy of "The Revolt of Islam," in possession of the late Lord Houghton. Whether it was genuine or a forgery I cannot say. Probably the copy of "The Revolt of Islam" was that of which Lowndes (under "Shelley") records the purchase for £10 at the Mitford Sale, April, 1860. We hear nothing of the *μωρός* from Lord Broughton, who was present on the occasion of Byron's discovering Shelley's entry in the visitors' book. "At an inn on the road," he writes, "the travellers' book was put before us, and Lord Byron, having written his name, pointed out to me the name of Mr. Shelley, with the words *atheist* and *philanthropist* written in Greek opposite to it; and observing, 'Do you not think I shall do Shelley a service by scratching this out?' he defaced the words with great care" ("Italy: Remarks made in Several Visits," etc., vol. i. pp. 1, 2). An entry copied by Shelley's schoolfellow, Matthews, from this same album at Montanvert—the comment of its donor—is worthy of a place here. "J'ai pensé," says the writer, "que les grandes impressions que l'on reçoit ici donneraient de grandes pensées; que la pureté, la légèreté de l'air qu'on y respire les feroit rendre avec netteté; par suite j'ai donné en Juillet 1809 un registre au Montanvert, pour que les Voyageurs y consignassent leur réflexions:—Je m'en repens. Ce que j'y ai lu—ce que je lis ici, me désespère. On a du bons sens quand on se détermine à voir la Vallée de Chamouni, mais je vois qu'on le perd en y arrivant."

of Arve on his way through the Valley of Chamouni;—in this, CHAP. I.  
 and in the noble “Hymn to Intellectual Beauty,” which was <sup>May-Sept.</sup>  
 also an overflow of thought and emotion in presence of the <sup>1816.</sup>  
 landscape of Switzerland.\* Vast and wonderful as the  
 material universe is, so Shelley writes in his verse, it borrows  
 its greatness and glory from what is spiritual; it is but like a  
 river flowing through a world of Thought, the hues and forms  
 of which it mirrors. Man is born and dies; and his works  
 and ways pass into nothingness, while the Power, of which  
 the giant mountain is a manifestation and an emblem, dwells  
 apart in its tranquility—

“Remote, serene, and inaccessible.”

Yet what were mountain and torrent and sky but a desert of  
 death, meaningless and void, if Thought and Love did not  
 inhabit this universe, and declare themselves in the brain and  
 heart of man? “The secret strength of things,” writes Shelley  
 in his address to Mont Blanc—

“Which governs Thought and to the infinite dome  
 Of heaven is as a law, inhabits thee!  
 And what wert thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,  
 If to the human mind’s imaginings  
 Silence and solitude were vacancy?”

But it is not merely in and through humanity that this  
 spiritual Power lives and moves and has its being. A Presence,  
 or its radiant yet awful shadow, haunts and startles and way-  
 lays us in all that is beautiful, sublime, or heroic in the world  
 without us or in the world within; to this we dedicate our  
 powers in all high moments of joy or aspiration; and when  
 the ecstasy has sunk and the joy has faded, still in a calmer,  
 purer temper, it may become the habit of our soul to follow  
 upon the track of this ideal Loveliness, until in a measure we  
 partake of its image.

\* Possibly the hymn was conceived during the lake-voyage with Byron.

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"The day becomes more solemn and serene  
When noon is past—there is a harmony  
In autumn, and a lustre in its sky,  
Which through the summer is not heard or seen,  
As if it could not be, as if it had not been !  
Thus let thy power, which like the truth  
Of nature on my passive youth  
Descended, to my onward life supply  
Its calm—to one who worships thee,  
And every form containing thee,  
Whom, Spirit fair, thy spells did bind  
To fear himself, and love all human kind." \*

If this be atheism, it is an atheism as "god-intoxicated" as that of the inspired and excommunicated Spinoza.

Bringing with them some specimens of minerals and dried flowers, the travellers, daunted by a renewed fall of rain, turned their faces from Chamouni on the fourth day after their arrival. A collection of the seeds of rare Alpine plants, with which he designed to colonize his English garden, was purchased by Shelley. "They are companions," he wrote, "which the celandine, the classic celandine, need not despise ; they are as wild and more daring than he, and will tell him tales of things even as touching and sublime as the gaze of a vernal poet." To Mary there was compensation for loss of the Col de Balme, with its view of Mont Blanc, eminent above his giant wardens of the plain, in the growing nearness to one small blue-eyed boy. She writes thus in her journal of the second day of the return journey : "*Saturday, July 27.*—It is a most beautiful day, without a cloud. We set off at twelve. The day is hot, yet there is a fine breeze. We pass by the Great Waterfall, which presents an aspect of singular beauty. The wind carries it away from the rock, and on towards the north, and the fine spray into which it is entirely dissolved passes

\* "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty." The reader will observe how much this poem has in common with Wordsworth's great Ode—"Intimations of Immortality," etc. ;

before the mountain like a mist. The other cascade has very little water, and is consequently not so beautiful as before. The evening of the day is calm and beautiful. Evening is the only time that I enjoy travelling. The horses went fast and the plain opened before us. We saw Jura and the Lake like old friends. I longed to see my pretty babe. At nine, after much inquiring and stupidity, we find the road and alight at Diodati. We converse with Lord Byron till twelve, and then go down to Chapuis, kiss our babe, and go to bed."

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For some time past Mary's thoughts had been much occupied with an imaginative invention of her own. She had dreamed of authorship from childhood, and during the hours assigned to recreation her girl's pastime had been to "write stories." From the first Shelley had incited her to produce something, which, even if unsuitable for publication, might be the forerunner of higher work. During the present summer the earlier days at Geneva went idly by, and as to authorship, it seemed to be enough that they should contribute to the creation of poetry by affording an immediate and sympathetic audience to Byron, when he brought to them successive fragments of "*Childe Harold*." \* During a few days of ungenial weather, which confined them to the house, some volumes of ghost stories, "*Fantasmagoriana, ou Recueil d'histoires d'apparitions, de spectres, revenans, etc.*"—a collection translated into French from the German—fell into their hands, and its perusal probably excited and overstrained Shelley's imagination. On the night of June 18, over a blazing wood fire, there was ghostly talk at Diodati, and when midnight was past, and the tales of spectres had been told, Byron lifted the theme of their talk—the supernatural and its manifestations—to the higher region of poetry. Coleridge's "*Christabel*" had just been published by Murray, to whom Byron had introduced its author. A copy of the poem had not yet reached Geneva, but

\* Shelley, probably after his return from the lake-voyage, read aloud to Mary the third canto.

CHAP. I. its verses lived in the memory of Byron, who had read it in  
 May-Sept. 1816. manuscript, and perhaps had heard it recited by Coleridge him-  
 self. He now repeated the lines descriptive of the mysterious  
 horror of the witch's bosom—

“Then drawing in her breath aloud  
 Like one that shuddered, she unbound  
 The cincture from beneath her breast :  
 Her silken robe and inner vest  
 Dropt to her feet, and full in view  
 Behold ! her bosom and half her side,  
 Hideous, deformed and pale of hue,  
 A sight to dream of, not to tell !  
 And she is to sleep by Christabel.” \*

“When silence ensued,” wrote Polidori in his diary, “Shelley, suddenly shrieking and putting his hands to his head, ran out of the room with a candle.” “Threw water on his face,” the physician continues, “and gave him ether. He was looking at Mrs. Shelley, and suddenly thought of a woman he had heard of, who had eyes instead of nipples ; which, taking hold of his mind, horrified him.” When the horror passed away and calm was restored, “We will each write a ghost story,” said Byron, and, with an agreement to carry his proposal into effect, they parted for the night. A story, founded on the experiences of his early life, was begun by Shelley and was soon abandoned. “Poor Polidori,” says Mrs. Shelley, “had some terrible idea about a skull-headed lady, who was so punished for peeping through a key-hole—what to see I forget ; something very shocking and wrong, of course.” Byron, in Miss Milbanke’s old account-book, cherished, we are told, because it contained the word “household” twice in her

\* I venture to restore the line of the poem as it existed in manuscript—  
 “Hideous, deformed and pale of hue,” judiciously omitted by Coleridge ; for if Byron recited from memory, as stated by Polidori, the passage so recited probably included this line. See the *Examiner*, June 2, 1816, in its review of “Christabel.” On August 26 Shelley received from England a copy of “Christabel,” which he read aloud to Mary on the night of its arrival.

handwriting, began his tale of the "Vampire," of which only CHAP. I.  
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1816. a small fragment was written, but the plan of which, having been arranged in his head and described to his friends, was appropriated, rehandled, and developed into the tale put forth three years later by Polidori. Morning after morning Shelley inquired of Mary, "Have you thought of a story?" and morning after morning came the disappointing answer, "No." One night she sat listening to a conversation between the two poets at Diodati; what was the nature—they questioned—of the principle of life? would it ever be discovered, and the power of communicating life be acquired?—"perhaps a corpse would be reanimated; galvanism had given token of such things." That night Mary lay sleepless, while moonlight struggled through the closed shutters of her bedroom, and she seemed to be aware of the lake and high white Alps beyond. But nearer than Alps or lake was the persecuting phantom of a pale student of the unhallowed arts engaged in creating a man-monster, at last endowed with life, and the shame and terror of the artist who had brought him into being. Such was the origin of the tale of "Frankenstein," so much of the scenery of which is that of Geneva, its lake, the high banks of Belrive, Sécheron, the mountains of Jura, and the Alps of Savoy. At Chamouni, after returning, wet through, from the attempted ascent of the Montanvert, Mary worked at her story; and the wonders of Chamouni, the source of Arveiron, and Mont Blanc are mirrored in its ninth and tenth chapters. The influence of Godwin in the imaginative parts of "Frankenstein," and that of Shelley on its moral tone and temper, are apparent. "I am by no means indifferent," says the preface to "Frankenstein," "to the manner in which whatever moral tendencies exist in the sentiments or characters it contains shall affect the reader; yet my chief concern in this respect has been limited to the avoiding the enervating effects of the novels of the present day, and to the exhibition of the amiableness of domestic affection, and the excellence of universal virtue." These

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words, and the whole of the brief preface which includes them, were written by Shelley.\* The man-monster of the strange tale is not by nature malevolent. Isolated from human sympathy, how can he be other than a criminal? "It is thus," Shelley wrote, "that, too often in society, those who are best qualified to be its benefactors and its ornaments are branded by some accident with scorn, and changed, by neglect and solitude of heart, into a scourge and a curse." Thus Frankenstein, like Alastor, is a pleading on behalf of human sympathy.

Mary's journal for the week which followed the return from Chamouni affords some pleasant glimpses of life at the lake-side cottage of Mont Alègre.

"*Sunday, July 28.*—Montalegre. I read Voltaire's 'Romans.' Shelley reads Lucretius and talks with Claire. After dinner, he goes out in the boat with Lord Byron; and we all go up to Diodati in the evening. This is the second anniversary since Shelley's and my union.

"*Monday, July 29.*—Write; read Voltaire and Quintus Curtius. A rainy day, with thunder and lightning. Shelley finishes Lucretius and reads Pliny's Letters.

"*Tuesday, July 30.*—Read Quintus Curtius. Shelley reads Pliny's Letters. After dinner, we go up to Diodati and stay the evening.

"*Wednesday, July 31.*—Read ten pages of Quintus Curtius, and Rousseau's 'Rêveries.' In the evening go up to Diodati.

"*Thursday, August 1.*—Make a balloon for Shelley,† after which he goes up to Diodati, to dine and spend the evening. Read twelve pages of Curtius. Write; and read the 'Rêveries' of Rousseau. Shelley reads Pliny's Letters.

"*Friday, August 2.*—I go to the town with Shelley, to buy a telescope for his birthday present. In the evening Lord

\* The preface to "Frankenstein" ought, therefore, to be included among the Prose Works of Shelley.

† A fire-balloon, to be set up in honour of Shelley's birthday.

Byron and he go out in the boat, and after their return Shelley and Claire go up to Diodati; I do not, for Lord Byron did not seem to wish it. Shelley returns with a letter from Longdill [his solicitor] which requires his return to England. This puts us in very bad spirits. I read 'Rêveries,' and 'Adèle and Théodore' de Madame de Genlis, and Shelley reads Pliny's Letters.

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"*Saturday, August 3.*—Finish the first vol. of 'Adèle,' and write. After dinner write to Fanny, and go up to Diodati, where I read the 'Life of Madame Deffand.' We come down early, and talk of our plans. Shelley reads Pliny's Letters, and writes letters.

"*Sunday, August 4.*—Shelley's twenty-fourth birthday. Write; read 'Tableau de Famille.' Go out with Shelley in the boat, and read aloud to him the fourth book of Virgil. After dinner we go up to Diodati, but return soon. I read Curtius with Shelley, and finish the first volume, after which we go out in the boat to set up the balloon, but there is too much wind; we set it up from the land, but it takes fire as soon as it is up. I finish the 'Rêveries' of Rousseau. Shelley reads and finishes Pliny's Letters, and begins the Panegyric of Trajan."

Before Shelley left Geneva for England he had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of Byron's guest, Matthew Gregory Lewis, long known to him through his "Tales of Wonder," "The Monk," and other writings in prose and verse. Through the brain of Apollo's Sexton, who would fain have made Parnassus a churchyard, still glided, as when Byron addressed him in his "English Bards," "thin-sheeted phantoms" in a grisly train. Yet the inventor of spectral horrors, which had held his readers in a trance of awed illusion, was himself curiously incredulous of the mysteries of the spirit-world. He was no better than a kindly English gentleman, with the narrow-mindedness of his class—a "jewel of a man had he been better set," as Byron found him, but decidedly "a bore." "We talk of ghosts,"



CHAP. I. Shelley notes in the journal on August 18, four days after  
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1816. Lewis's arrival at Diodati; "neither Lord Byron nor Monk G. Lewis seem to believe in them; and they both agree, in the very face of reason, that none could believe in ghosts without also believing in God. I do not think that all the persons who profess to discredit these visitations really discredit them, or, if they do in the daylight, are not admonished by the approach of loneliness and midnight to think more respectfully of the world of shadows." Lewis now had thoughts for the living whose interests concerned him more deeply than the affairs of the dead. He had just returned from his West Indian property, and was much moved by the thought of the uncertain tenure, at a master's will or caprice, of their rights and comforts by his negroes. Shelley, who in 1814 had read with horror of the cruelties of the slave-traffic, doubtless entered with sympathetic zeal into Lewis's views; and on August 20 was signed a remarkable codicil to Lewis's will, requiring the heir of his Jamaica estates to pass three months once at least in every three years upon the property, and forbidding the sale of any negro, or the diminution of any of the comforts or indulgences which their kindly master had himself allowed to his slaves. The codicil, which is written with a vehement ardour of humanity, unlike the colourless manner of a legal instrument, was witnessed by Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and John Polidori.

A letter from Fanny Godwin kept Shelley informed of affairs in Skinner Street. Godwin's prospects were troubled and cloudy, and for all classes in England the times were hard. Fanny's own spirits had relapsed from the cheerfulness to which her acquaintance with George Blood, her mother's friend, had given rise; in vain she dutifully struggled against the gathering melancholy; a dark flood of despondency and vague alarm rose higher and higher, and threatened to engulf her. Yet she gossips cheerfully of Coleridge and Lamb, and is eager for news of Byron and Shelley.

*Fanny Godwin to Mary.*

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London, July 29, 1816.

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1816.

MY DEAR MARY,

I have just received yours, which gave me great pleasure, though not quite so satisfactory a one as I could have wished. I plead guilty to the charge of having written in some degree in an ill humour; but if you knew how I am harassed by a variety of trying circumstances, I am sure you would feel for me. . . . I have received Jane's letter, which was a very dear and a very sweet one, and I should have answered it but for the dreadful state of mind I generally labour under, and which I in vain endeavour to get rid of. From your and Jane's description of the weather in Switzerland, it has produced more mischief abroad than here. Our rain has been as constant as yours, for it rains every day, but it has not been accompanied by violent storms. . . . You ask for particulars of the state of England. I do not understand the causes for the distress which I see, and hear dreadful accounts of, every day; but I know that they really exist. Papa, I believe, does not think much, or does not inquire, on these subjects, for I never can get him to give me any information. [An account of the distress in England, with its alleged causes, follows.] There have been riots of a very serious nature in the inland counties, arising from the same causes. This, joined to this melancholy season, has given us all very serious alarm, and helped to make me write so dismally. They talk of a change of Ministers; but this can effect no good; it is a change of the whole system of things that is wanted. Mr. Owen [Owen of New Lanark], however, tells us to cheer up, for that in two years we shall feel the good effects of his plans; he is quite certain that they will succeed. I have no doubt he will do a great deal of good; but how he can expect to make the rich give up their possessions, and live in a state of equality, is too romantic to be believed. . . . I hate and am sick at heart at the misery I see my fellow-beings suffering, but I own I should not like to live to see the extinction of all genius, talent, and elevated generous feeling in Great Britain, which I conceive to be the natural consequence of Mr. Owen's plan. I am not either wise enough, philosophical enough, nor historian enough, to say what will make man plain and simple in manners and mode of life, and at the same time a poet, a painter, and a philosopher; but this I know, that I had rather live with the Genevese, as you and Jane

CHAP. I. describe, than live in London, with the most brilliant beings that  
 May-Sept. exist, in its present state of vice and misery. So much for Mr.  
 1816. Owen, who is, indeed, a very great and good man. He told me the  
 other day that he wished our Mother was living, as he had never  
 met with a person who thought so exactly as he did, or who would  
 have so warmly and zealously entered into his plans. . . .

I wish I could send you the books you ask for. I should have  
 sent them, if Longdill had not said he was not sending—that he  
 expected Shelley in England. I shall send again immediately, and  
 will then send you “Christabel,” and the “Poet’s” *poems* [*i.e.*  
 Byron’s]. Were I not a dependent being in every sense of the  
 word, but most particularly in money, I would send you other  
 things, which perhaps you would be glad of. I am much more  
 interested in Lord Byron since I have read all his poems. The  
 pleasure he has excited in me, and gratitude I owe him for having  
 cheered several gloomy hours, makes me wish for a more finished  
 portrait both of his *mind* and *countenance*. From “Childe Harold”  
 I gained a very ill impression of him, because I conceived it was  
*himself*, notwithstanding the pains he took to tell us it was an  
 imaginary being. The “Giaour,” “Lara,” and the “Corsair”  
 make me justly style him a poet. Do in your next oblige me by  
 telling me the minutest particulars of him, for it is from the *small*  
*things* that you learn most of character. Is his face as fine as in  
 your portrait of him, or is it more like the other portrait of him?  
 Tell me also if he has a pleasing voice, for that has a great charm  
 with me. Does he come into your house in a careless, friendly  
 dropping-in manner? I wish to know, though not from idle  
 curiosity, whether he was capable of acting in the manner that the  
 London scandal-mongers say he did. I cannot think from his  
 writings that he can be such a *detestable being*. Do answer me these  
 questions, for where I love the poet I should like to respect the  
 man.

Shelley’s boat excursion with him must have been very delight-  
 ful. I think Lord Byron never writes so well as when he writes  
 descriptions of water-scenes. . . . There could have been no differ-  
 ence of sentiment in this divine excursion; they were both poets,  
 equally alive to the charms of nature and the eloquent writings of  
 Rousseau. I long very much to read the poem the “Poet” has  
 written on the spot where Julie was drowned. When will they  
 come to England? Say you have a friend, who has few pleasures,

and is very impatient to read the poems written at Geneva. If they are not to be published, may I see them in manuscript? I am angry with Shelley for not writing himself. It is impossible to tell the good that Poets do their fellow-creatures, at least those that can feel. Whilst I read I am a poet. I am inspired with good feelings—feelings that create perhaps a more permanent good in me than all the every-day preachments in the world; it counteracts the dross which one gives on the every-day concerns of life, and tells us there is something yet in the world to aspire to—something by which succeeding ages may be made happy and perhaps better. If Shelley cannot accomplish any other good, he can this divine one. Laugh at me, but do not be angry with me for taking up your time with my nonsense.

CHAP. I.  
May-Sept.  
1816.

I have sent again to Longdill, and he has returned the same answer as before. I can therefore send you "Christabel." Lamb says it ought never to have been published; that no one understands it; and "Kubla Khan" (which is the poem he made in his sleep) is nonsense. Coleridge is living at Highgate—he is living with an apothecary, to whom he pays £5 a week for board, lodging, and medical advice. The apothecary is to take care that he does not take either opium or spirituous liquors. Coleridge, however, was tempted, and wrote to a chemist he knew in London to send him a bottle of laudanum to Mr. Murray's in Albemarle Street, to be inclosed in a parcel of books to him; his landlord, however, felt the parcel outside and discovered the fatal bottle. Mr. Morgan told me the other day that Coleridge improved in health under the care of this apothecary, and was writing fast a continuation of "Christabel." . . .

The Lambs have been spending a month in the neighbourhood of Clifton and Bristol; they were highly delighted with Clifton. Sheridan is dead. Papa was very much grieved at his death. William and he went to his funeral. He was buried in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey, attended by all the high people. Papa has visited his grave many times since. . . .

You ask what I mean by "plans with Mr. Blood." I meant a residence in Ireland. However, I will not plague you with them till I understand them myself. My Aunt Everina will be in London next week, when my future fate will be decided. I shall then give you a full and clear account of what my unhappy life is to be spent in, etc.

CHAP. I.  
May-Sept.  
1816.

I left it to the end of my letter to call your attention most seriously to what I said in my last letter respecting Papa's affairs. They have now a much more serious and threatening aspect than when I last wrote to you. . . . He has as yet gained nothing on his novel ["Mandeville"], and all depends upon his future exertions. He has been very unwell, and very uneasy in his mind for the last week, unable to write; and it was not till this day I discovered the cause, which has given me great uneasiness. [Details follow respecting a debt of £300.] I dread the effect on his health. He cannot sleep at night, and is indeed very unwell. . . . Shelley said in his letter, some weeks ago, that the £300 should come the end of June. Papa therefore acted upon that promise. From your last letter, I perceive you think I colour my statements. I assure you I am most anxious, when I mention these unfortunate affairs, to speak the truth and nothing but the truth; as it is, I think it my duty to tell you the real state of the case, for I know you deceive yourself about things. If Papa could go on with his novel in good spirits, I think it would perhaps be his very best. He said the other day that he was writing upon a subject no one had ever written upon before, and that it would require great exertion to make it what he wished. Give my love to Jane; thank her for her letter. . . . Give my love, also, to Shelley; tell him if he goes any more excursions, nothing will give me more pleasure than a description of them. . . . Kiss dear William for me; I sometimes consider him as my child, and look forward to the time of my old age and his manhood. . . . Write small, for Mamma complains of the postage of a double letter. I pay the full postage of all the letters I send, and you know I have not a *son* of my own. Mamma is much better, though not without rheumatism. William is better than he ever was in his life. I am not well; my mind always keeps my body in a fever; but never mind me. Adieu, my dear sister. Let me entreat you to consider seriously all that I have said concerning your father.

Yours very affectionately,

FANNY.

The gentle Fanny, with her few pleasures and many anxieties, was not forgotten or neglected by Shelley and Mary. Before quitting the neighbourhood of Geneva, they visited the town to choose a watch for her, as a souvenir of their

foreign travel. A few days later, on August 28, for the last time they were floating upon the sapphire waters of the lake, and next morning at nine they had started on their journey to England. As far as Dijon, the route by which they had come in May was followed; thence by Rouvray and Auxerre they proceeded to Fontainebleau and Versailles. "Could a Grecian architect," Shelley writes, "have commanded all the labour and money which are expended on Versailles, he would have produced a fabric which the whole world has never equalled." As it was, in the arrangement of the costly materials Shelley perceived "something effeminate and royal." The librarian displayed for the inspection of visitors a book containing coloured illustrations of a tournament of the court of Louis XIV.; to Shelley it seemed that "the present desolation of France, the fury of the injured people, and all the horrors to which they abandoned themselves, stung by their long sufferings, flowed, naturally enough, from expenditures so immense as must have been demanded by the magnificence of this tournament." "The vacant rooms of this palace," he adds, "imaged well the hollow show of monarchy." The Imperial House in the fifth canto of "The Revolt of Islam"—a "gorgeous grave," its storied walls answering vacantly to the footfalls of Laon, while the twilight gathers "like a charnel's mist within the radiant dome"—may be a reminiscence of the solitude and desolation of Versailles.

CHAP. I.  
May-Sept.  
1816.

## CHAPTER II.

AUTUMN AND WINTER IN BATH (SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER,  
1816).

CHAP. II. Sept.-Dec. 1816. HAVING travelled to Havre, and on the way visited Rouen, where the interior of the cathedral disappointed their expectations, Shelley and his party sailed for Portsmouth in a baffling wind on September 7, and after a voyage of twenty-seven hours reached England. When free to proceed, a day having been lost by detention at the Custom House, Shelley and Mary parted—he to transact business in London and seek a house in the country with Peacock's aid, she to remain in Bath with little William and Clara, and the Swiss nurse, Elise. At what precise date Shelley and Mary became aware of the fact that Clara in reckless passion had given herself to Byron, we cannot tell. Medwin, speaking of the residence at Geneva, states that he had reason to believe that the intrigue was carried on with the greatest secrecy, and that "neither the Shelleys nor Polidori were for a long time privy to it." In fact it may have been for Byron, during his sojourn at Diodati, a thing of the past, though he did not yet openly break with the woman who was to be mother of his child. The occasional references to Clara in Mary's journal rather favour Medwin's statement. But the anticipated birth of Byron's child could hardly have been unknown to Mary and Shelley when they landed in England. Clara was most anxious to conceal what had taken place from Godwin and her mother, and Shelley and Mary had no desire to betray her secret. It would

seem to have been arranged that she was to remain in Bath under the name of Mrs. Clairmont,\* and that Mary was to be her companion there until Shelley should have found a suitable house. The moral indignation which Byron's act might justly arouse seems to have been felt by neither Shelley nor Mary. As yet it remained unproven that Byron did not truly love Clara, unproven that he did not intend to act loyally towards her and her babe, as far as loyalty under such circumstances is possible. Shelley's conception of the social and moral obligations between man and woman in organized societies was radically unsound ; all offences against order were in his eyes sanctified by love, if love were deep and true, and Byron had not yet given evidence that he could be false and cruel to Clara.

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From Marlow, where Shelley was the guest of Peacock, he conveyed Peacock's invitation to Mary to join them there. It was little more than a twelvemonth since they had voyaged together up the Thames, and now they were once again close to its loveliest reaches, in the delightful autumn days. With Rousseau and Richardson for indoor recreation, and outdoor walks to the Fisherman's Cliff and Medmenham Abbey, nestling beneath its woody uplands, the time from September 20 to September 24 went sunnily by, and no ill news from Bath came to disturb the pleasure of the autumnal calm. Little William was safe in the care of Elise and of Clara, who wrote cheerfully. "'Itty Babe,'" she informed Mary, "is seated in his chair, leaning his head like a sick lady against a white pillow; he is most unmercifully throwing about two dogs, fortunately made of strong china, or there would certainly be broken bones in the case. . . . As to his nightgowns, both Elise and myself have puzzled and puzzled over them, and, to use Albè's language, 'mused and coddled' without effect. . . . Tell Peacock to make his book 'funny.' You have fine

\* A letter of Shelley's to Miss Clairmont at Bath is addressed to Mrs. Clairmont.



CHAP. II. weather. I have read the trial of William Lord Byron, for  
 Sept.-Dec. the murder of Mr. Chaworth; a most foolish affair, in which  
 1816. poor Lord Byron seems to have the family complaint of suspicion and defence where any reasonable man would have taken no offence. When he had wounded Chaworth, his first exclamation was, 'By Heaven, I am as brave as any man in England!' Truly Albeian! . . . I just stooped to ask 'Itty Babe' if I should send his love, which he returned by putting his *heel* with great composure into my *eye*. . . . Don't over-walk Shelley, and pray *make* him get a great-coat.\* My love to him. I must conclude, for I am going to walk with 'Itty,' who is grumbling most comfortably."

On September 25 Shelley and Mary were back at 5, Abbey Churchyard, Bath, with Clara and their eight-months-old boy. The hope which Shelley entertained of receiving a considerable sum of money from his father, in part to clear off debts contracted on the faith of a successful issue to their negotiations of the spring, had been dashed, and to his grief he found himself unable to pay Godwin the three hundred pounds which he had promised. To Godwin, who had given an exacting creditor a bill on demand for that sum, the disappointment was cruel. His novel of "Mandeville" was progressing well; but everything depended on his tranquility of mind. "I have already written more than half a volume," he told Shelley in August. "I am satisfied with my plan; I think it will be better than "St. Leon," and will take place next after "Caleb Williams." I am in good tone, and anxious to proceed. The tone, however, I must confess, is kept up with considerable effort, and is only preserved by a faith that relates to you, and a confident hope that the relief so long expected from your quarter will at length be fully realized. If I am disappointed in this, if my affairs in the mean time go to a wreck that can no longer be resisted, then the novel will never be finished."†

\* Shelley, according to Hogg, never would wear a great-coat.

† August 3, 1816; copy of Godwin's letter in Fanny's handwriting.

Such an appeal as this was peculiarly moving to Shelley, who prized inordinately Godwin's imaginative work; but to fulfil his engagements was not in his power. Such money as he had, however, he sent without delay.

CHAP. II.  
Sept.-Dec.  
1816.

*Shelley to Godwin.*

5, Abbey Churchyard, Bath [postmark Bath, October 2, 1816].

I am exceedingly sorry to disappoint you again. I cannot send you £300, because I have not £300 to send. I enclose within a few pounds the wrecks of my late negotiations with my father.

In truth I see no hope of my attaining speedily to such a situation of affairs as should enable me to discharge my engagements towards you. My father's main design in all the transactions which I have had with him has gone to tie me up from all such irregular applications of my fortune. In this he might have failed had he not been seconded by Longdill, and between them both I have been encompassed with such toils as were impossible to be evaded. When I look back I do not see what else I could have done than submit: what is called firmness would have, I sincerely believe, left me in total poverty.

In the present instance I expected to have saved £500 or £600; 300 of which, as I informed you, were devoted to you. I have saved only 248, my father having made an indispensable condition that all my debts should be paid. . . . Shall I conclude this unwelcome letter by assuring you of the continuance of those dispositions concerning your welfare which I have so often expressed? Shall I say that I am ready to co-operate in whatever plan may be devised for your benefit?

P. B. SHELLEY.

Great and sudden calamities, pain, and sorrow, were to bring Godwin and Shelley once more together before the year had closed, and anxieties connected with money were for a time to seem trivial in comparison with griefs more cruel and overwhelming. During the spring and summer Fanny Godwin had suffered from deep dejection of spirits. In July she wrote to Mary of "the dreadful state of mind" under which she generally laboured, and of which she endeavoured in vain

CHAP. II. to rid herself; "my mind," she added, "always keeps my body in a fever; but never mind me." "My Aunt Everina," she wrote, "will be in London next week, when my future fate will be decided. I shall then give you a full and clear account of what my unhappy life is to be spent in." How Fanny's fate was decided we do not know; but we know that Everina Wollstonecraft had withdrawn her confidence and affection from Fanny in the spring, and that, although friendly relations had been restored, she was capable of a harsh decision. With Godwin's affairs so painfully entangled, with Mary and Clara in great measure lost to her, and the house in Skinner Street saddened, with Mrs. Godwin's violence and suspicion of temper, with the sense of her own uselessness and dependence—she, a burden to every one—it needed but a slight cause to transform Fanny's wretched dejection to despair. Mary Wollstonecraft, her mother, who had written to Imlay so gladly, so exquisitely, about Fanny's baby ways, in her own anguish of spirit had sought for peace in the waters below Putney Bridge, and had barely been rescued from untimely death. Godwin, whose cool temper preserved him from any temptation to self-destruction, had argued in "Political Justice" that suicide is not necessarily criminal—"the difficulty is to decide in any instance whether the recourse to a voluntary death can overbalance the usefulness I may exert in twenty or thirty years of additional life." As to Fanny—a helpless victim caught in the coils of the maelstrom of despair—she might well conclude that the death of a feeble and unhappy being was a thing to be desired, and that it was no ill deed to remove from the world one who, she believed, had been nothing but a cause of pain and injury to those connected with her. It was a theory satisfactory to Mrs. Godwin, and one which Godwin adopted, that the unhappy girl perished because she was consumed by a hopeless passion for Shelley. Miss Clairmont, at least in later years, when she thought more piously of her mother than in the days when she fled from home and

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refused to return under her mother's guardianship, accepted CHAP. II.  
 this explanation of the cause of Fanny's death. But assuredly Sept.-Dec.  
 Fanny would not have made Godwin and his wife her confi- 1816.  
 dants in such a case. And Clara Clairmont had been absent  
 from home not only since July, 1814, setting aside a few short  
 visits, but for the two years immediately preceding that date,  
 a fact which may account for her having less affection for  
 Fanny, as she confessed after Fanny's death, than might have  
 been expected. Were even slender evidence discoverable  
 which should confirm the opinion of Godwin, we might  
 contentedly accept that opinion as true. But no vestige of  
 evidence lends it confirmation. On the other hand, it is  
 clear that for a considerable time before her death Fanny's  
 depression of spirits, caused by a number of circumstances,  
 was extreme, and from her dying declaration, made in writing,  
 it appears that she looked upon herself as worse than useless,  
 as a source of unhappiness to those most closely connected  
 with her; they might grieve for her loss during a few days,  
 but her departure from life—so she had come to believe—  
 would soon bring them relief and positive benefit. The tone  
 of her letters lends no colour to the notion that she was  
 pining through love for Shelley or for any one; there is in  
 them an affectionate frankness when Shelley is mentioned,  
 and she can even take him to task, in a sisterly manner, for  
 a supposed lack of just and open dealing with Godwin in  
 his financial embarrassments. Gentle, fair-minded, and con-  
 siderate towards every one except herself, Fanny desired that  
 even Mrs. Godwin, who had made home unhappy for her,  
 should suffer no injustice in the thoughts of others; it is  
 touching to observe, in her letter to Mary, written a few days  
 before her death, how sincere is her solicitude that Mrs. Godwin,  
 though to herself far from amiable, should be valued for the  
 good qualities which she undoubtedly possessed. Fanny with-  
 drew from life as one defeated, for whom the struggle had been  
 too hard, and who lacked the toughness of fibre which can

CHAP. II. endure a long-continued strain; she withdrew from life because, in her weakness and her melancholy, she looked upon herself as a sad encumbrance to the world; she withdrew, not in violence or passion, but stealing away with hopeless eye and rapid step to darkness, silence, and oblivion.\*

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Everina Wollstonecraft, I am assured by a lady who still remembers her,† was an overbearing, disagreeable, ill-tempered

\* The evidence that Miss Clairmont and the Godwins put forward the statement that Fanny died in consequence of disappointed love of Shelley is as follows. In Mrs. Gisborne's diary (still in manuscript) she writes, "Sunday, 9th July [1820]. . . . He [Godwin] then expatiated much on the tender maternal affection of Mrs. G[odwin] for her daughter [Claire], and the bitter disappointment of all her hopes in the person to whom alone she looked for comfort and happiness in the decline of her life; he described her as a being of the most irritable disposition possible, and therefore suffering the keenest anguish on account of this misfortune, of which M. [Mary] is the sole cause, as she pretends; she regards M. as the greatest enemy she has in the world. Mr. G. told me that the three girls were all equally in love with —, and that the eldest put an end to her existence owing to the preference given to her younger sister." It was natural that Mrs. Godwin, whose regard for truth was not a distinguishing feature of her character, should find it expedient to discover an explanation of Fanny's death other than one which reflected blame upon herself, and it was natural that Godwin, who had small perception of his domestic surroundings, should accept his wife's statement that the three girls were in love with Shelley, and that Fanny's desperate act was thus to be explained. Miss Clairmont repeats her mother's statement, accepting it as true. She adds that Charles Clairmont was so affected by Fanny's death that he fell ill, spat blood, and was sent to Bordeaux, where it was thought that complete change of scene would banish the sad remembrances associated with his home. As a fact, Charles Clairmont had left England long before Fanny's death, having been, like Fanny, far from happy in his home. On August 8, 1816, he wrote to Shelley and Mary that he had been absent nearly a year from Skinner Street; that he had gone to the Continent in the hope of bettering his position; that any refuge, however menial, would be more acceptable to him than Godwin's house, and that he had not written to Godwin or his mother for twelve months. "While at Paris," he writes, "and on my journey southward, I had nothing to speak of but my pleasures, and well understanding my mother's disposition, I knew how such an account would sound in her ears." The youth, represented as sorrowing for Fanny and near dying in consequence, was in fact making love to a French girl at Bagnères, and the Godwins had never mentioned to him the painful subject of Fanny's death. He had gone to drink the waters for an attack of indigestion, and was now in excellent health, climbing mountains, learning Spanish, and enjoying himself. He writes nearly a year after that event (August 9, 1817), "I have no heart to write to Skinner Street, for they will not answer my letters. Perhaps now that this haughty woman [Mrs. Godwin] is absent, I should obtain a letter. I think I shall make an effort with Fanny. . . . Tell me if Godwin has been to visit you at Marlow; if you see Fanny often."

† Miss Mary Hutton, of Fairfield, Glasnevin, Dublin.

woman, very sarcastic and very clever—a great contrast to her sister, Mrs. Bishop, who had beautiful brown eyes, most winning gentle manners, and whose whole bearing gave the idea of a perfectly lady-like and refined person. On questioning my informant as to the cause of Fanny's suicide, the answer came without doubt or hesitation, "Because Everina would not have Fanny with her. It was just like Everina; she was a hard woman." From Godwin's letter, written to Mary after her sister's death, we learn that it had been in contemplation that Fanny should go to her aunts in Ireland; but that she was not on her way to Ireland when she died; rather that she had left home seeking a place wherein to die, and had written from Bristol announcing, though in veiled words, her fatal resolution. A harsh missive from Everina Wollstonecraft might well have sufficed, with one in Fanny's mood of deep dejection, to reduce her to despair. To her sister Mary the cause of Fanny's death seemed evident—that she was without a home in which it was possible for her to be happy or at rest; had she but lived a few weeks longer, thought Mary, had she but lived until her sister was Shelley's wedded wife, then Fanny's death would never have taken place, for a fit home and happy resting-place would have been open to her. As it was, she seems to have been a cause of disturbance to Mrs. Godwin in the Skinner Street house; Aunt Everina in Dublin "would not have her;" and she did not possess, as she tells Mary, a *sou* of her own.\*

\* An anecdote of Everina and her sister, derived from Miss Hutton, is perhaps worth preserving here. One evening the conversation turned on "Corinne." The Huttons said they did not like "Corinne;" Everina defended the book. The argument waxing very hot, Mrs. Bishop smilingly handed round the *sugar-bowl*; the debate ceased, and all was good temper. Mr. William Le Fanu tells me that Mrs. Bishop was very pretty, and was very kind to him when a boy; often gave him sugar-plums. Everina was tall and formidable. One day Everina came to his father's house to dinner. "Of course we are very glad to see you," said the host, "but there is no one to meet you; it was for to-morrow we invited you." *Everina*. "You write such an abominably bad hand that it is impossible to know what day one is invited for." *Mr. Le Fanu*. "But it was my wife who wrote the letter." *Everina*. "Well, if you *had* written it, it would have been in

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1816.

Two letters from Fanny were received by Mary at Bath in the days of late September and early October, neither of which gave any hint of the approaching calamity.

*Fanny Godwin to Mary.*

September, 26, 1816.

MY DEAR MARY,

I received your letter last Saturday, which rejoiced my heart. I cannot help envying your calm contented disposition, and the calm philosophical habits of life which pursue you, or rather which you pursue, everywhere; I allude to your description of the manner in which you pass your days in Bath, when most women would hardly have recovered from the fatigues of such a journey as you had been taking. I am delighted to hear such pleasing accounts of your William; I should like to see him, dear fellow; the change of air does him infinite good, no doubt.

I am very glad you have got Jane a pianoforte; if anything can do her good and restore her to industry, it is music. I think I gave her all the music here; however, I will look again for what I can find. I am angry with Shelley for not giving me an account of his health. All that I saw of him gave me great uneasiness about him, and as I see him but seldom. I am much more alarmed perhaps than you, who are constantly with him. I hope that it is only the London air which does not agree with him, and that he is now much better; however, it would have been kind to have said so.

Aunt Everina and Mrs. Bishop left London two days ago. It pained me very much to find that they have entirely lost their little income from Primrose Street, which is very hard upon them at their age. Did Shelley tell you a singular story about Mrs. B. having received an annuity which will make up in part for her loss?

Poor Papa is going on with his novel, though I am sure it is very fatiguing to him, though he will not allow it; he is not able to study as much as formerly without injuring himself; this, joined to the plagues of his affairs, which he fears will never be closed,

such an abominably bad hand that I could not have made it out." Everina taught the boys in the Hume Street School, in Dublin; the gentler Mrs. Bishop the girls. The following entry in Mary's journal for December 4 is worth noting: "A letter from Mrs. Godwin to Clare, and to me a letter from Aunt Everina concerning my sister."

make me very anxious for him. The name of his novel is "Man-  
 deville, or a Tale of the Seventeenth Century." I think, however, CHAP. II.  
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 you had better not mention the name to any one, as he wishes it  
 not to be announced at present. Tell Shelley, as soon as he knows  
 certainly about Longdill, to write, that he may be eased on that  
 score, for it is a great weight on his spirits at present.

Mr. Owen is come to town to prepare for the meeting of Parlia-  
 ment. There never was so devoted a being as he is; and it certainly  
 must end in his doing a great deal of good, though not the good he  
 talks of.

Have you heard from Charles? He has never given us a single  
 line. I am afraid he is doing very ill, and has the conscience not  
 to write a parcel of lies. Beg the favour of Shelley to copy for me  
 his poem on the scenes at the foot of Mont Blanc, and tell him or  
 remind him of a letter which you said he had written on these  
 scenes; you cannot think what a treasure they would be to me;  
 remember you promised them to me when you returned to England.  
 Have you heard from Lord Byron since he visited those sublime  
 scenes?

I have had great pleasure since I saw Shelley in going over a  
 fine gallery of pictures of the Old Masters at Dulwich. . . . But the  
 works of art are not to be compared to the works of nature, and I  
 am never satisfied. It is only poets that are eternal benefactors of  
 their fellow-creatures, and the real ones never fail of giving us the  
 highest degree of pleasure we are capable of; they are, in my  
 opinion, nature and art united, and as such never fading.

Do write to me immediately and tell me you have got a house,  
 and answer those questions I asked you at the beginning of this  
 letter.

Give my love to Shelley, and kiss William for me.

Your affectionate sister,

FANNY.

The following letter of October 3 is the latest piece of  
 Fanny's writing which remains with us.

*Fanny Godwin to Mary.*

October 3, 1816.

MY DEAR MARY,

I wrote immediately on the receipt of yours, because I  
 think one always expresses oneself better immediately under the



CHAP. II. influence of any impression which has been made upon our feelings, and we, to a certain degree, see things in a much more vivid manner under those circumstances. I either related my story very ill to Shelley, or he, paying little regard to what I might say, chose to invent a story out of his own imagination for your amusement, which you too have coloured to your own mind, and made what was *purely accidental*, and which only occurred *once*, a story after the manner of "Caleb Williams," viz. of "Mamma pursuing you like a hound after foxes." I do not choose to be made the author of a glaring *falsehood*. Mamma and I are not great friends, but, always alive to her virtues, I am anxious to defend her from a charge so foreign to her character. I know that she has *every* good will and wish for you and your child, and would do a great deal to serve you. I am certain she would never do either of you a deliberate or deadly injury. Shelley she can never forgive for having prevailed upon Jane to remain with you at the time you resided in Switzerland; \* but still she is anxious to make you appear in the very best manner whenever she has occasion to speak to you. I could relate several instances to prove the truth of what I have stated.

Mamma went to Bracknell, not to Bishopsgate, to spend a few days with Mrs. Eastwick. There, in one of her walks, she accidentally went into a cottage to rest herself, and it proved to be where Harriet had lodged the last time she had been to Bracknell. The woman then related, for gossip, the things which I related to Shelley; to these I joined what Mrs. Eastwick said to Mamma about you all, and which I have no doubt she gained from the Hopwoods (whom you know of old). These things I thought it right to mention to Shelley when he said you thought of settling in that neighbourhood.

I told him these, and I still think they originated with your servants and Harriet, who, I know, has been very industrious in spreading false reports against you. I, at the same time, advised Shelley always to keep French servants, and he then seemed to think it a good plan. You are very careless, and are for ever leaving your letters about. English servants like nothing so much as scandal and gossip; but this you know as well as I, and this is the origin

\* The reference is probably to the fact that when Mrs. Godwin pursued Shelley, Mary, and Clara to Calais in July, 1814, Shelley opposed Clara's return to London.

of the stories that are told. And this you choose to father upon CHAP. II.  
 Mamma, who (whatever she chooses to say in a passion to me alone) Sept.-Dec.  
 is the woman the most incapable of such low conduct. I do not say 1816.  
 that her inferences are always the most just or the most amiable.  
 but they are always confined to myself and Papa. Depend upon it  
 you are perfectly safe as long as you keep your French servant  
 with you.

It is very painful to me to have to mention Papa's affairs, particularly as you appear to wish to avoid them; but you must be aware that he has been made very uneasy by Shelley's letter. I should have been obliged to Shelley if he had seen me when he came to town to sign; though, to own the truth and not offend either of you, I cannot help thinking that he had arranged everything with Longdill before I parted from him in Piccadilly the other day, and for these reasons he chose not to be frank with me. I think, in the present state of Papa's spirits, it is of the utmost consequence to keep his mind as easy as possible, and to endeavour to prevent any sudden shock. If Shelley had told me to inform Papa that he must not expect to have the whole £300, it would have done much better than leading him to expect the whole would come in a fortnight.\* You are aware that a promissory note for £300 is in the hands of a person to whom Godwin is an entire stranger, and from whom he can expect no mercy. You know the peculiar temperature of Papa's mind (if I may so express myself); you know he cannot write when pecuniary circumstances overwhelm him; you know that it is of the utmost consequence, for *his own* and the *world's sake*, that he should finish his novel; and is it not your and Shelley's duty to consider these things, and to endeavour to prevent, as far as lies in your power, giving him unnecessary pain and anxiety? Shelley's letter came like a thunderclap. I watched Papa's countenance while he read it (not knowing the contents), and I perceived that Shelley had written in his most desponding manner.

I have now to entreat you, Shelley, to tell Papa exactly what you can and what you cannot do, for he does not seem to know what you mean in your letter. I know that you are most anxious to do everything in your power to complete your engagement to him, and

\* Shelley's interview with Fanny was probably on September 24, when he went to town from Marlow. On the day before this letter of Fanny's was written, Shelley wrote to Godwin the letter printed (p. 47), and sent him what money he could.

CHAP. II. to do anything that will not ruin yourself to save him ; but he is not  
 Sept.—Dec. convinced of this, and I think it essential to his peace that he should  
 1816. be convinced of this. I do not on any account wish you to give him false hopes. Forgive me if I have expressed myself unkindly. My heart is warm in your cause, and I am *anxious, most anxious*, that Papa should feel for you as I do, both for your own and his sake. I have written in a great hurry, and have not had time to consider and round my sentences ; but I am so direct in all my thoughts and opinions that I cannot but believe every one must like frankness as much as myself.

All that I have said about Mamma proceeds from the hatred I have of talking and petty scandal, which, though trifling in itself, often does superior persons much injury, though it cannot proceed from any but vulgar souls in the first instance.

Your affectionate

FANNY.

It was recalling the interview with Fanny in London that Shelley afterwards wrote the mournful stanza—

“ Her voice did quiver as we parted ;  
 Yet knew I not that heart was broken  
 From whence it came, and I departed  
 Heeding not the words then spoken.  
 Misery—O Misery,  
 This world is all too wide for thee ! ”

Mirth and anguish are in odd juxtaposition in Mary's journal for the opening days of October. On the 6th Shelley makes a playful entry : “ On this day Mary put her head through the door, and said, ‘ Come and look ; here's a cat eating roses ; she'll turn into a woman ; when beasts eat these roses they turn into men and women.’ ” Three days later came a very alarming letter from Fanny, who suddenly had left Godwin's home, and having passed through Bath without calling on her sister, now wrote from Bristol. “ Shelley goes immediately to Bristol,” the journal records. “ We sit up for him till two in the morning, when he returns, but brings no particular news.” On that night Fanny, having arrived at the Mackworth Arms

Inn, Swansea, by the Cambrian coach from Bristol, retired to CHAP. II. rest, telling the chambermaid that she was exceedingly fatigued, <sup>Sept.-Dec. 1816.</sup> and would herself take care of the candle. When she did not appear next morning they forced her chamber door, and found her lying dead; her long brown hair about her face; a bottle of laudanum upon the table, and a note which ran thus: "I have long determined that the best thing I could do was to put an end to the existence of a being whose birth was unfortunate, and whose life has only been a series of pain to those persons who have hurt their health in endeavouring to promote her welfare.\* Perhaps to hear of my death will give you pain, but you will soon have the blessing of forgetting that such a creature ever existed as . . ." She had with her the little Genevan watch, a gift of travel from Mary and Shelley; and in her purse were a few shillings. She had stated to a fellow-passenger on the coach that she was on her way to Ireland, but the sum of money in her possession would not nearly have sufficed for such a journey. In 1814 she had visited Wales, and possibly may have known Swansea, where now she chose to set up her everlasting rest.† On Thursday, October 10, Godwin, informed from Bristol of her resolve, set out from London in pursuit, and on the same morning Shelley again visited Bristol and obtained more certain traces. Godwin's stay at the scene of the disaster was as brief as possible; on his return journey he slept at Bath, but did not visit his daughter. Next day, October 12, Shelley brought the lamentable tidings to Mary. "He returns," the journal tells us, "with the worst account. A miserable day. Two letters from Papa. Buy mourning and work in the evening." In Godwin's letter to Mary of a day or two later, there is a quiver of emotion, which we feel through its

\* Perhaps this has reference to some speech of Mrs. Godwin's about what she and Godwin had gone through for Fanny's sake.

† Possibly Fanny chose Swansea as the place of death because it was the most remote from London, on a route already known to her, to which her slender means would convey her.

CHAP. II. enforced calm, and which makes us aware of the weight of  
 Sept.-Dec. 1816. the blow which so could shake and shatter the writer's  
 habitual equanimity.

*Godwin to Mary.*

October 13, 1816.

I did indeed expect it.

I cannot but thank you for your strong expressions of sympathy. I do not see, however, that that sympathy can be of any service to me; but it is best. My advice and earnest prayer is that you would avoid anything that leads to publicity. Go not to Swansea; disturb not the silent dead; do nothing to destroy the obscurity she so much desired that now rests upon the event. It was, as I said, her last wish; it was the motive that led her from London to Bristol and from Bristol to Swansea.

I said that your sympathy could be of no service to me, but I retract the assertion; by observing what I have just recommended to you, it may be of infinite service. Think what is the situation of my wife and myself, now deprived of all our children but the youngest [William Godwin]; so do not expose us to those idle questions, which to a mind in anguish is one of the severest of all trials. We are at this moment in doubt whether, during the first shock, we shall not say that she is gone to Ireland to her aunt, a thing that had been in contemplation. Do not take from us the power to exercise our own discretion. You shall hear again to-morrow.

What I have most of all in horror is the public papers, and I thank you for your caution, as it might act on this.

We have so conducted ourselves that not one person in our home has the smallest apprehension of the truth. Our feelings are less tumultuous than deep. God only knows what they may become.

The following is one expression in her letter to us, written from Bristol on Tuesday: "I depart immediately to the spot from which I hope never to remove."

The shock of excitement and grief caused by so terrible an event was for a time disastrous to Shelley's health.\* He remained at Bath with shattered nerves, writing a little,

\* This we learn from a letter of Miss Clairmont.

correcting proofs of Byron's new canto of "Childe Harold" CHAP. II.  
 (the manuscript of which he had brought from Switzerland), Sept.—Dec.  
1816.  
 and gleaning what pleasure was possible at such a time from Montaigne, Plutarch, Cervantes, and Milton.\* On October 26 he began to keep an account of the quantity of food which he ate each day, and records for the first day a total of twenty-two ounces. Mary, with characteristic firmness of will, set herself steadily to work; pushed forward with "Frankenstein;" studied Latin; read Locke with Shelley; dipped into chemistry; took lessons in drawing. Clara, anxieties of her own being added to the recent misery, passed wretched hours brooding over all that could afflict her, and often wishing herself in possession of that everlasting repose to which Fanny had attained.

In this season of sorrow one happiness came unexpectedly to Shelley—the gain of a friend who had himself known care and sorrow, but whose bright temper, buoyant fancy, and generous heart ever leaped resurgent from the strokes of fortune. "Alastor," Shelley's first poem of high achievement, had now been published for almost two years; but the public and the reviewers seemed to have agreed that it did not deserve serious consideration. "We must candidly own," said the critic of the *Monthly Review*, "that these poems are beyond our comprehension; and we did not obtain a clue to their sublime obscurity, till an address to Mr. Wordsworth explained in what school the author had formed his taste. . . . We entreat him, for the sake of his reviewers as well as of his other readers (if he has any), to subjoin to his next publication an *ordo*, a glossary and copious notes, illustrative of his allusions and explanatory of his meaning." On December 1, 1816, arrived at Bath a letter from Leigh Hunt, and on the

\* A letter of Shelley's, dated October 2, apparently to Murray, promises that he will correct Byron's proofs with the greatest care. Byron, it may be noted, had sent a second manuscript to Murray, but desired that in some particulars that entrusted to Shelley should be preferred. On November 9 Mary notes in her journal, "Shelley reads and finishes Montaigne, to his great sorrow."

CHAP. II. same day appeared in the *Examiner*, Leigh Hunt's journal, an article entitled "Young Poets," noticing three writers who, according to the critic's judgment, promised to bring a considerable addition of strength to the new school of English poetry. One, John Hamilton Reynolds, had published a slender volume or two of verse. Another had not yet published anything except in a newspaper; "but a set of his manuscripts was handed us the other day," said the reviewer, whose signature—a hand pointing—identifies him with Leigh Hunt, "and fairly surprised us with the truth of their ambition and ardent grappling with nature." This second writer was John Keats. The work of the third was little known to the critic, for he had mislaid the one or two specimens he had had before him; "but we shall procure what he has published," the article went on, "and if the rest answer to what we have seen, we shall have no hesitation in announcing him for a very striking and original thinker. His name is Percy Bysshe Shelley, and he is the author of a poetical work entitled 'Alastor; or, The Spirit of Solitude.'" "A very striking and original thinker"—no characterization of his powers could have been more gratifying to Shelley. Leigh Hunt had been long known to him, as the most prominent champion of liberal ideas among journalists, and as one who had suffered for the cause. From Oxford Shelley had addressed a letter to the *Examiner*, proposing an Association of the friends of liberty for mutual encouragement and defence, but the letter had not been inserted by the editor. Later Shelley had called on Hunt to seek advice about a poem which he desired to publish, but the slight acquaintance had not ripened into intimacy. Shelley was then "a youth not come to his full growth; very gentlemanly, gazing earnestly at every object that interested him, and quoting the Greek dramatists."\* Yet again at a later date, when the editor of the *Examiner* was undergoing imprisonment for his libel on the Prince Regent, Shelley wrote

\* Leigh Hunt's Autobiography, chap. xv.

to him, making a "princely offer," of which, however, at that time Hunt did not stand in need. Thus communications favourable to the growth of friendship had already taken place between Shelley and Hunt, but neither as yet could be said to possess a real, personal knowledge of the other. Now, when Shelley most needed a sympathizing friend, such a friend he was to have. Early in December he left Bath to visit Peacock at Marlow and inquire for a house, and from Marlow he turned townwards, to be the guest of Hunt in the old-world suburb of Hampstead, so justly dear to Hunt, with streets, hills and dells, to the south—

"Trees overhead now seen,  
Now down below, with smoking roofs between—  
A village revelling in varieties ;"

while to the north, what a range of heath !

"Nature's own ground—woods that let mansions through,  
And cottaged vales, with pillowy fields between,  
And clumps of darkening pines and prospects blue."

Before leaving Marlow, Shelley received a letter from Mary at Bath, advising him as to the choice of a house, and sending loving words and wishes. The visit to Hunt was not as yet in contemplation, or at least was not anticipated by Mary, but she was aware that Shelley had either given or conveyed to Hunt a considerable sum of money, possibly for his private wants, possibly as a contribution to the relief of the distressed poor in Spitalfields, on whose behalf Hunt, on the occasion of a Mansion House meeting for the purpose of opening a subscription, had pleaded in the number of the *Examiner* that contained his article on "Young Poets."

*Mary to Shelley.*

New Bond Street, Bath, December 6, 1816.

SWEET ELF,

I was awakened this morning by my pretty babe, and was dressed time enough to take my lesson from Mr. West, and

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CHAP. II. (thank God) finished that tedious ugly picture I have been so long about. I have also finished the fourth chapter of "Frankenstein," Sept.-Dec. 1816. which is a very long one, and I think you would like it.

And where are you? and what are you doing, my blessed love? I hope and trust that, for my sake, you did not go outside this wretched day, while the wind howls and the clouds seem to threaten rain. And what did my love think of as he rode along—did he think about our home, our babe, and his poor Pecksie? But I am sure you did, and thought of them all with joy and hope. But in the choice of a residence, dear Shelley, pray be not too quick or attach yourself too much to one spot. Ah! were you indeed a winged Elf, and could soar over mountains and seas, and could pounce on the little spot! A house with a lawn, near a river or lake, noble trees or divine mountains—that should be our little mouse-hole to retire to. But never mind this; give me a garden, and *absentia* Claire, and I will thank my love for many favours.\* If you, my love, go to London, you will perhaps try to procure a good Livy, for I wish very much to read it. I must be more industrious, especially in learning Latin, which I neglected shamefully last summer at intervals, and those periods of not reading at all put me back very far.

The *Morning Chronicle*, as you will see, does not make much of the riots, which, they say, are entirely quelled, and you would be almost inclined to say, "Out of the mountain comes forth a mouse," although I dare say poor Mrs. Platt does not think so.†

The blue eyes of your sweet boy are staring at me while I write this; he is a dear child, and you love him tenderly, although I fancy your affection will increase when he has a nursery to himself, and only comes to you just dressed and in good humour; besides, when that comes to pass, he will be a wise little man, for he improves in mind rapidly. Tell me, shall you be happy to have another little squaller? You will look grave on this, but I do not mean anything.

Leigh Hunt has not written. I would advise a letter addressed

\* Miss Clairmont's name is frequently written "Clare" by Shelley and Mary, but she herself preferred the form "Claire," and I shall henceforth use that form wherever the name occurs—not to add a fourth variety to the "Jane," "Clara," and "Claire" which appear from time to time in my pages.

† In the riots consequent on the distress in London, Mr. Platt, who kept a gunsmith's shop in Skinner Street—the street in which Godwin lived—was seriously wounded by a gunshot.

to him at the *Examiner* office, if there be no answer to-morrow. He may not be at the Vale of Health, for it is odd that he does not acknowledge the receipt of so large a sum. There have been no letters of any kind to-day.

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1816.

Now, my dear, when shall I see you? Do not be very long away; take care of yourself, and take a house. I have a great fear that bad weather will set in. My airy Elf, how unlucky you are! I shall write to Mrs. Godwin to-morrow; but let me know what you hear from Hayward and Papa, as I am greatly interested in those affairs.\* Adieu, sweetest; love me tenderly, and think of me with affection whenever anything pleases you greatly.

Your affectionate girl,

MARY.

I have not asked Claire, but I dare say she would send her love, although I dare say she would scold you well if you were here. Compliments and remembrances to Dame Peacock and son, but do not let them see this. Sweet, adieu.

The visit to Leigh Hunt was brief, but delightful. "Letter from Shelley," Mary writes in her journal (December 13); "he is pleased with Hunt." On the day after his return to Bath—December 15—came a note from Hookham, which brought appalling tidings. For a short time past Shelley had lost sight of Harriet. In March of the present year, while the arguments with respect to the sale of the reversion to Sir Timothy were proceeding, her infant son, Charles Bysshe, had been produced on Shelley's behalf in the Court of Chancery. "Whitton," † Shelley writes, in a letter to Godwin of March 9, "said that the production of the infant had already procrastinated the proceedings, much to the displeasure of Sir Timothy." It is probable that Shelley was not present on that occasion, for in the later Chancery action he declared that he had never seen his son; but it seems likely that he would

\* A letter from Mrs. Godwin with £100 came on December 6, after this letter had been despatched. I infer that Godwin, negotiating on Shelley's behalf with Hayward, had obtained the money which Shelley had promised to procure for him, and £100 over, for Shelley's own use, which Mrs. Godwin now sent to Mary.

† Sir Timothy Shelley's solicitor.

CHAP. II. have communicated with Harriet on the subject. Unhappily the journal for the early months of 1816 has been lost, and no positive evidence is procurable. In June Harriet was in communication with Peacock, and through him with Sir Timothy Shelley's solicitor. She had received, on March 1, her half-yearly instalment of one hundred pounds, paid in advance, and she was assured that future instalments would be as punctually paid in September and March of each year. She applied to Sir Timothy for an additional sum, and it was pointed out to her by Whitton, communicating through Peacock, that in addition to the two hundred a year allowed to her by her husband, she had also two hundred a year allowed by Mr. Westbrook. Whitton further expressed his opinion that it was in her power to purchase an annuity of £200 or £400, with a portion of her reversionary interest; but he forbore advising such a step. "He cannot do anything in the matter himself," Peacock wrote to Harriet on June 24, "further than this, that he will state the case for the opinion of an insurance office as the equivalent value of an annuity and a portion of your reversion, and he will send me the result." In September Shelley returned to England, and in the midmost days of that month he was Peacock's guest at Marlow. At what precise date Harriet disappeared from the cognizance of Shelley we cannot say. But we know that in November he was seeking for her, and seeking in vain. That she lived with or under the protection of her father until a short time before her death was affirmed on oath by her sister. Immediately before her death she resided in a house in Queen Street, Brompton, at no great distance from Hyde Park and the Serpentine river. To this house she did not return on the night of November 9. A month later, on December 10—a day on which Shelley's visit to Leigh Hunt had just begun—her body was found in the Serpentine river; on her finger was a valuable ring.\*

\* The entries in Godwin's journal are as follows: "November 9, H. S. dies." "December 10, H. S. found; disappeared three weeks." The entry of November 9

Harriet Shelley's life, apart from that of Shelley, forms no CHAP. II.  
 portion of the story told in these volumes. There is no doubt Sept.-Dec.  
1816.  
 that she wandered from the ways of upright living; how far she wandered we need not inquire. If she sinned, she also sorrowed; we would think of her, not as a desperate fugitive from life, but as the fair, bright, innocent, kind-hearted Harriet of her early wedded days. That no act of Shelley's during the two years which immediately preceded her death tended to cause the rash act which brought her life to its close, seems certain. He had left her, believing that she was unfaithful to him; he had written to her kindly, undertaking to watch over her interests; he had seen that she was safe in the protection of her nearest relatives; at her urgent entreaty, much against his own desire, he had left his children in her care;\* he had, according to his means, guarded her against want or poverty; when for a time she disappeared from his ken, he had instituted inquiries to discover her whereabouts. Remotely he was beyond question an influence of perilous power to one who, as events proved, was not strong enough to walk surely and safely alone, under difficult and painful circumstances, through the dangers which beset her path. By his teaching he had led her to think lightly of the established rule and order of society; but this he had done conscientiously, believing that the revolutionary creed which he had accepted from Godwin's writings was favourable to virtue. His example had not been an example of the patience, endurance, and self-denial which, when old ties are broken, should be

was probably 'inserted after the facts had been more exactly ascertained than they were when Godwin wrote on December 10. It should be noted, however, that in the Westbrooks' Chancery declarations Harriet is said to have died in December. Those who wish to look further into the matter may see the *Times* for December 12, 1816.

\* "And this defendant says that at the urgent entreaty of his said late wife he permitted his said children to reside with her under her management and protection, after her separation from this defendant, although this defendant saith he was very anxious, from his affection for his said children, to have had them with him under his own care and management during his said wife's life" (In Chancery, "The Answer of Percy B. Shelley," etc., 1817).

CHAP. II. practised before the formation of new ties. Had such self-denying fortitude been his, not only would his life have been saved from much misrepresentation and some pain, not only would he have left a nobler precedent for other lives entangled in like difficulties with his own, but a strenuous virtue might have passed from his life into his art, which would have strengthened its nerve and fibre, and enriched and sobered its enthusiasm. But Shelley could not be other than Shelley, possessing, to borrow the French phrase, the defects of his qualities; and at twenty-two neither was his judgment mature nor his moral temper fully formed.

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1816.

According to the story which reached Shelley, and which he accepted as true—a story which we have no means of verifying or disproving—Harriet, through her sister's influence, had been driven from her father's house, and being subsequently deserted by one on whom she had a claim for kindness and consideration, she sought in death a speedy and desperate issue from her perplexities and griefs. Frequently, from the days of early girlhood, she had spoken of suicide with a composure which led those acquainted with her to assume that no serious meaning underlay her words. "Early in our acquaintance," says Hogg, "the good Harriet asked me, 'What do you think of suicide?' She often discoursed of her purpose of killing herself some day or other, and at great length, in a calm resolute manner. She told me that at school, where she was very unhappy, as she said, but I could never discover why she was so, . . . she had conceived and contrived sundry attempts and purposes of destroying herself. . . . She got up in the night, she said, sometimes with a fixed intention of making away with herself. . . . She spoke of self-murder serenely before strangers, and at a dinner-party I have heard her describe her feelings, opinions, and intentions with respect to suicide with prolix earnestness; and she looked so calm, so tranquil, so blooming, and so handsome, that the astonished guests smiled." And again, the summer of 1813 being the

date to which this later statement refers, "The good Harriet CHAP. II.  
 . . . was bright, blooming, calm, and composed as heretofore, Sept.-Dec.  
1816.  
 but she had not renounced her eternal purpose of suicide; and she still discoursed of some scheme of self-destruction as coolly as another lady would arrange a visit to an exhibition or a theatre."\* To live for her children was indeed a duty with Harriet after the parting between her and her husband had taken place; but how if she were conscious that she had disqualified herself for rendering to her children a mother's highest services?† Nothing would then remain to bind her to the wretchedness of an unhappy life, in a world where all seemed to have abandoned her. Yet Shelley at this moment, or but a few days later, was seeking her in vain through the vast labyrinth of London.

It was three days after Harriet Shelley's body had been found that Hookham wrote, informing Shelley of the event.

*T. Hookham to Shelley.*

MY DEAR SIR,

It is nearly a month since I had the pleasure of receiving a letter from you, and you have no doubt felt surprised that I did not reply to it sooner. It was my intention to do so; but, on inquiry, I found the utmost difficulty in obtaining the information you desire relative to Mrs. Shelley and your children.

While I was yet endeavouring to discover Mrs. Shelley's address, information was brought me that she was dead—that she had destroyed herself. You will believe that I did not credit the report. I called at the house of a friend of Mr. Westbrook; my doubt led to conviction. I was informed that she was taken from the Serpentine river on Tuesday last.‡ . . . Little or no information was laid before the jury which sat on the body. She was called Harriet Smith, and the verdict was *found drowned*.

Your children are well, and are both, I believe, in London.

This shocking communication must stand single and alone in

\* Hogg's "Life of Shelley," vol. ii. pp. 7, 8, and p. 283.

† As a fact, the infant children had been sent away to Warwick, to the care of a schoolmaster named Kendall.

‡ The words omitted do not in any way relate to Shelley.

CHAP. II. the letter which I now address to you: I have no inclination to fill  
 Sept.—Dec. it with subjects comparatively trifling: you will judge of my  
 1816. feelings and excuse the brevity of this communication.

Yours very truly,

T. HOOKHAM, JUN.

Old Bond Street, December 13, 1816.

On the afternoon of the day on which this letter reached him at Bath—a Sunday—Shelley hastened to London to claim his children, and on the following day his letter, making Mary a sharer in his sufferings, his fears, and hopes, was on its way.

*Shelley to Mary.*

London, December 15, 1816.\*

I have spent a day, my beloved, of somewhat agonizing sensations, such as the contemplation of vice and folly and hard-heartedness, exceeding all conception, must produce. Leigh Hunt has been with me all day, and his delicate and tender attentions to me, his kind speeches of you, have sustained me against the weight of the horror of this event.

The children I have not got. I have seen Longdill, who recommends proceeding with the utmost caution and resoluteness; he seems interested. I told him I was under contract of marriage to you, and he said that, in such an event, all pretence to detain the children would cease. Hunt said very delicately that this would be soothing intelligence to you. Yes, my only hope, my darling love, this will be one among the innumerable benefits which you will have bestowed upon me, and which will still be inferior in value to the greatest of benefits—yourself. It is through you that I can entertain without despair the recollection of the horrors of unutterable villany that led to this dark, dreadful death. I am to hear to-morrow from Desse [Mr. Westbrook's attorney] whether or no I am to engage in a contest for the children. At least it is consoling to know that its termination in your nominal union with me—that after having blessed me with a life, a world of real happiness—a mere form appertaining to you will not be barren of good. . . .

\* The journal tells us that Shelley left Bath for town on the afternoon of the 15th. He could not have reached London before night, and therefore this letter must have been dated 15th instead of 16th by a mistake.

Everything tends to prove, however, that beyond the shock of CHAP. II.  
Sept.-Dec.  
1816. so hideous a catastrophe having fallen on a human being once so nearly connected with me, there would in any case have been little to regret. Hookham, Longdill, every one, does me full justice; bears testimony to the upright spirit and liberality of my conduct to her. There is but one voice in condemnation of the detestable Westbrooks. If they should dare to bring it before Chancery, a scene of such fearful horror would be unfolded as would cover them with scorn and shame.

How is Claire? I do not tell her, but I may tell you, how deeply I am interested in her safety. I need not recommend her to your care. Give her any kind message from me, and calm her spirits as well as you can. I do not ask you to calm your own.

I am well in health, though somewhat faint and agitated; but the affectionate attentions shown me by Hunt have been sustainers and restoratives more than I can tell. Do you, dearest and best, seek happiness—where it ought to reside—in your own pure and perfect bosom; in the thoughts of how dear and how good you are to me; how wise and how extensively beneficial you are perhaps now destined to become.

Remember my poor babes, Ianthe and Charles. How tender and dear a mother they will find in you—darling William, too! My eyes overflow with tears. To-morrow I will write again.

Your own affectionate

SHELLEY.

Shelley, under contract of marriage to Mary, instantly thought of the possibility now opened for the fulfilment of that contract. Mary, gratified by the anticipated sanction of a legal and ceremonial kind about to be conferred on her union with Shelley, remembered with an added anguish the recent death of Fanny, a homeless fugitive from home; for had she lived but these few weeks longer, she might have found a happy abiding-place in the house of her married sister. On receiving Shelley's London letter, Mary wrote in reply as follows:—



## CHAP. II.

Sept.-Dec.  
1816.*Mary to Shelley.*

Bath, December 17, 1816.

MY BELOVED FRIEND,

I waited with the greatest anxiety for your letter. You are well, and that assurance has restored some peace to me.

How very happy shall I be to possess those darling treasures that are yours! I do not exactly understand what Chancery has to do in this, and wait with impatience for to-morrow, when I shall hear whether they are with you; and then what will you do with them? My heart says, bring them instantly here; but I submit to your prudence. You do not mention Godwin. When I receive your letter to-morrow I shall write to Mrs. Godwin. I hope, yet I fear, that he will show on this occasion some disinterestedness.

Poor dear Fanny, if she had lived until this moment, she would have been saved, for my house would then have been a proper asylum for her. Ah! my best love, to you do I owe every joy, every perfection, that I may enjoy or boast of. Love me, sweet, for ever. I hardly know what I mean, I am so much agitated. Claire has a very bad cough, but I think she is better to-day. Mr. Carn talks of bleeding if she does not recover quickly, but she is positively resolved not to submit to that. She sends her love. My sweet love, deliver some message from me to your kind friends at Hampstead; tell Mrs. Hunt that I am extremely obliged to her for the little profile she was so kind as to send me, and thank Mr. Hunt for his friendly message, which I did not hear.

These Westbrooks! But they have nothing to do with your sweet babes; they are yours, and I do not see the pretence for a suit; but to-morrow I shall know all.

Your box arrived to-day. I shall send soon to the upholsterer, for now I long more than ever that our house should be quickly ready for the reception of those dear children whom I love so tenderly. Then there will be a sweet brother and sister for my William, who will lose his pre-eminence as eldest, and be helped third at table, as Claire is continually reminding him.

Come down to me, sweetest, as soon as you can, for I long to see you, and embrace.

As to the event you allude to [the celebration of marriage], be governed by your friends and prudence as to when it ought to take place; but it must be in London.

Claire has just looked in; she begs you not to stay away long, to be more explicit in your letters, and sends her love.

You tell me to write a long letter, and I would, but that my ideas wander and my hand trembles. Come back to reassure me, my Shelley, and bring with you your darling Ianthe and Charles. Thank your kind friends. I long to hear about Godwin.

Your affectionate

MARY.

Have you called on Hogg? I would hardly advise you. Remember me, sweet, in your sorrows as well as your pleasures; they will, I trust, soften the one and heighten the other feeling. Adieu.

The death of Harriet Shelley, following hard upon that of Fanny Godwin, shook Shelley to the centre; but of the two calamitous events, the death of Fanny brought with it, as Shelley declared, far the crueller anguish. How he should have survived shock following on shock was a thing, as he himself wrote, not to be understood. Two duties, however, were clear; he must place Mary, with as little delay as possible, in her right position as his wife; and he must obtain possession of his children, Ianthe and Charles. For himself nothing would be changed by the ecclesiastical ceremony of marriage, but Mary desired it, especially because her new position would restore her to her father, who naturally was importunate on the subject. By Miss Clairmont we are assured that the opinion of one more versed in the ways of the world than either Godwin or Shelley—Sir Lumley Skeffington\*—was asked as to the propriety of immediate marriage, or of a year's delay after the mournful death of Harriet, and that he, having the circumstances laid before him while the names of the parties were reserved, advised in favour of a marriage without delay.† Leaving Claire, with Elise and little William, in Bath, Shelley and Mary came to town. On December 27, Godwin saw his future

\* Sir Lumley St. George Skeffington, born 1778, was a leader of fashion during twenty years, a lover of literature, and author of "The Word of Honour," a comedy. His conduct towards his father, whom he rescued from distress by consenting to cutting off the entail of his estates, was regarded as having reflected extraordinary honour upon him.

† Peacock was also consulted, and gave the same advice.

CHAP. II. son-in-law at Skinner Street, and next day called with him at Sept.-Dec. 1816. Doctors' Commons, and proceeded thence to visit his daughter. "P. B. S. and M. W. G.," writes Godwin in his diary of the 29th, "dine and sup." No joyous renewal of the old intimacy to Shelley, for the memories of recent griefs haunted and oppressed him in these rooms, where Harriet had sat in her happy wedded days, and where he had seen the gentle Fanny moving to and fro. On the morning of December 30, at St. Mildred's Church, in the city, in the presence of Godwin and his wife, the marriage was celebrated. "Call at Mildred w[ith] P. B. S., M. W. G., and M. J.," writes Godwin in his diary, with curious secretiveness; "they dine and sup. . . . See No. xviii. *infra pag. ult.*" And turning to the blank page at the end of the eighteenth fasciculus of his journal (that which chronicles events of the year 1814), we find, safe for reference, but removed from its correct chronological place, the record of the ceremony of the morning, with its date truly and faithfully given. During these days Mary neglected her journal, and the incidents of this eventful fortnight are recorded in a few lines: "I have omitted writing my journal for some time. Shelley goes to London and returns; I go with him; spend the time between Leigh Hunt's and Godwin's. A marriage takes place on the 30th December, 1816. Draw; read Lord Chesterfield and Locke."

On the afternoon of his marriage-day, Shelley wrote to Claire Clairmont in Bath, a letter to which it was intended that Mary should add her part. He smiles at the magic ceremony which had been undergone; but the smile appears upon a dark background of melancholy pain.

*Shelley to Claire Clairmont.\**

London, December 30, 1816.

DEAREST CLAIRE,

Your letter to-day relieved me from a weight of painful anxiety. Thank you too, my kind girl, for not expressing much

\* The letter is addressed to Mrs. Clairmont, 12, New Bond Street, Bath.

of what you must feel—the loneliness and the low spirits which arise from being entirely left. Nothing could be more provoking than to find all this unnecessary. However, they will now be satisfied and quiet.\*

CHAP. II.  
Sept.—Dec.  
1816.

We cannot come to-morrow, there being no inside place in any of the coaches, or in either of the mails. I have secured a place for Wednesday [January 1, 1817]—the day following that on which you will receive this letter—so that you will infallibly see us on that evening. I may say that it was by a most fortunate chance that I secured the places that I did.

The ceremony, so magical in its effects, was undergone this morning at St. Mildred's Church, in the City. Mrs. G. and G. were both present, and appeared to feel no little satisfaction. Indeed Godwin throughout has shown the most polished and cautious attentions to me and Mary. He seems to think no kindness too great in compensation for what has past. I confess I am not entirely deceived by this, though I cannot make my vanity wholly insensible to certain attentions paid in a manner studiously flattering. Mrs. G. presents herself to me in her real attributes of affectation, prejudice, and heartless pride. Towards her, I confess, I never feel an emotion of anything but antipathy. Her sweet daughter is very dear to me.

We left the Hunts yesterday morning and spent the evening at Skinner Street, not unpleasantly. We had a bed in the neighbourhood, and breakfasted with them before the marriage. Very few inquiries have been made of you, and those not of a nature to show that their suspicions have been alarmed.† Indeed, all is safe there.

I write to Clairmont by to-day's post, inclosing him £20. So that you see our expected advantage from added income this quarter comes to very little.‡

Do not answer our letter, as we shall be on our way to you before it can reach London. The G.'s give the most singular accounts of Mrs. Boinville, etc.

I will not tell you how dreadfully melancholy Skinner Street appears with all its associations. The most horrid thought is how

\* Perhaps this means that, but for the desire on Godwin's part to see the ceremony duly performed, it might as well have been celebrated in Bath, and then Claire need not have suffered her present loneliness.

† I.e. as to Miss Clairmont's connection with Byron.

‡ Charles Clairmont was at Bagnères de Bigorre. The added income was the £50 payable to Harriet.

CHAP. II. people can be merry there! But I am resolved to overcome such  
 Sept.-Dec. sensations—if I do not destroy them I may be myself destroyed.  
 1816.

The Baxters, we hear, have suddenly lost all [their] fortune, and are reduced to the lowest poverty.

Adieu, my dear. Keep up your spirits and manage your health till we come back. It will be Wednesday evening at nine o'clock. Adieu, my dear. Kiss Willy and yourself for me.

Ever affectionately yours,

P. B. SHELLEY.

Mary can't write, being all day with Mrs. G.

Thus closed the year 1816—a year eventful in Shelley's life. The negotiation with Sir Timothy and its collapse; the publication of "Alastor;" the visit to Switzerland; the acquaintance with Byron; the death of Harriet; the death, if possible more lamentable, of Fanny Godwin; the issue of Byron's intrigue with Claire Clairmont, which threw her upon Shelley for human sympathy, and in great measure for material support; the friendship of Leigh Hunt; the marriage which brought the year to a close;—these filled the twelve months with incident and passions, and helped to mature the character of Shelley by experiences of pain and joy.

#### LIST OF BOOKS READ IN 1816.\*

##### MARY.

(Those marked \* Shelley has read also.)

*Moritz, Tour in England.	Lady Craven's Letters.
Tales of the Minstrels.	Caliste.
*Park's Journal of a Journey in Africa.	Nouvelles Nouvelles.
Peregrine Proteus [by Wieland].	Romans de Voltaire.
*Siege of Corinth. Byron's Parisina.	Rêverie d'un Solitaire, de Rousseau.
4 vols. of Clarendon's History.	Adèle et Théodore.
*Modern Philosophers.	*Lettres Persanes de Montesquieu.
Opinions of various Writers on the	Tableau de Famille.
Punishment of Death. By B. Mon-	Le Vieux de la Montagne.
tagu.	*Conjuration de Rienzi.
Erskine's Speeches.	Walther, par Lafontaine.
*Caleb Williams.	Les Vœux Téméraires.
*3rd canto of Childe Harold.	Herman d'Unna.
Schiller's Armenian.	Nouvelles Nouvelles de Mad de Genlis.

\* From Mary's note-book containing the journal.

Contes Moraux de Marmontel.

\*Christabel.

Caroline de Lichtenfield.

\*Bertram.

\*Le Criminal Secret.

Vancenza. By Mrs. Robinson.

Antiquary.

\*Edinburgh Review. No. LII.

Chrononhotonthologus.

\*Fazio.

Love and Madness.

Memoirs of Princess of Bareith.

\*Letters of Emile.

The latter part of Clarissa Harlowe.

Clarendon's History of the Civil War.

\*Life of Holcroft.

\*Glenarvon.

Patronage.

The Milesian Chief.

O'Donnel.

\*Don Quixote.

\*Vita Alexandri Quintii Curtii.

Conspiracy de Rienzi.

Introduction to Davy's Chemistry.

Les Incas des Marmontel.

Bryan Perdue.

Sir C. Grandison.

\*Castle Rackrent.

\*Gulliver's Travels.

\*Paradise Lost.

\*Pamela.

\*3 vols. of Gibbon.

1 book of Locke's Essay.

Some of Horace's Odes.

\*Edinburgh Review. No. LIII.

Rights of Woman.

De Senectute. By Cicero.

2 vols. of Lord Chesterfield's Letters to  
his Son.

\*Story of Rimini.

CHAP. II.

Sept.-Dec.  
1816.

#### SHELLEY.

Works of Theocritus, Moschus, etc.

Prometheus of Æschylus (Greek).

Works of Lucian (Greek).

Telemacho.

La Nouvelle Héloïse.

Blackwell's History of the Court of  
Augustus.

Lucretius, De Rerum Natura.

Epistolæ Plinii.

Annals by Tacitus.

Several of Plutarch's Lives (Greek).

Germania of Tacitus.

Mémoires d'un Détenu.

Histoire de la Révolution, par Rabaut  
et Lacretelle.

Montaigne's Essays.

Tasso.

Life of Cromwell.

Locke's Essay.

Political Justice.

Lorenzo de Medici.

Coleridge's Lay Sermon.

## CHAPTER III.

## IN CHANCERY.

CHAP.  
III.  
Jan. 1817–  
July, 1818.

Two duties had been clear to Shelley. One of these was now fulfilled by the performance in St. Mildred's Church, on the morning of December 30, of the ceremony "so magical in its effects." The other—to obtain possession of his children—was of more difficult accomplishment. Miss Westbrook and her father were determined to dispute the claim of Shelley to hold and rear and educate his son and daughter. When, together with Leigh Hunt, he demanded and re-demanded his children, the demand was refused, and no information would be vouchsafed as to their whereabouts. As a fact, when Harriet died, her daughter, aged three, and her infant boy of two years old were away in Warwick, under the care of the Rev. John Kendall, master of the Earl of Leicester's Hospital, and vicar of Budbrooke.\* In order to strengthen the appeal which he was about to make to the Court of Chancery, Mr. Westbrook on January 2 transferred the sum of £2000, four per cent. bank annuities, into the names of his daughter, Eliza Westbrook, and John Higham, in the parish of St. George, Hanover Square, in trust for the children; which sum, if the Lord Chancellor should so decide, might be again transferred into the name of the Accountant-General of the Court of Chancery.

\* This statement is made on the authority of the report of the Chancery proceedings of August 26, 1877, in the *Morning Chronicle* of August 27: "The plaintiffs proposed Mr. Kendall, of Warwick, a respectable schoolmaster, under whom the children were at the time of the decease of their mother."

It was erroneously supposed by the Westbrooks that Sir Timothy Shelley had contracted in the summer of 1815 to make provision for his son's children, and they calculated that if the case went in their favour, the guardians appointed by the Court would have in their hands the administration, for the benefit of little Charles and Ianthe, of a considerable sum of money. But no such contract had ever been entered into by Sir Timothy Shelley.

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Jan. 1817-  
July, 1818.

The Chancery proceedings, although the main question was decided in March, 1817, did not come to a close until Midsummer of the following year, when Shelley and his wife had been for some months residents in Italy; but it will be convenient to follow the course of these affairs from first to last, at a single view. On January 8, 1817, the infants Eliza Ianthe Shelley and Charles Bysshe Shelley, their maternal grandfather and next friend John Westbrook acting on their behalf, filed their Bill of Complaint to Lord Eldon as High Chancellor of Great Britain. Their father, they declare, deserted his wife three years since, to cohabit unlawfully with Mary Godwin, daughter of the author of "Political Justice," ever since which desertion they have remained in the custody and under the protection of Mr. Westbrook and his daughter Elizabeth. The father, who now claims possession of them, "avows himself to be an Atheist," and "has written and published a certain work called 'Queen Mab,' with notes, and other works," wherein he has "blasphemously derided the truth of the Christian revelation and denied the existence of God as the Creator of the universe." Having recited the provisions made with reference to the money placed on their behalf by Mr. Westbrook in the hands of trustees, the infant orators pray that their persons and fortunes may not be placed in the custody of their father, but under the protection of the Court of Chancery, in whose power it lies to appoint, after due inquiry, proper persons to act as their guardians, and to issue directions for their maintenance and education. For



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July, 1818.

their immediate relief they further pray that their father may be restrained by the injunction of the Court from taking possession of their persons. Supporting this prayer of the children, Eliza Westbrook made two affidavits. In one of these she identifies as Shelley's the handwriting of nine letters addressed to Harriet Shelley, now laid before the Court, and also the handwriting of a letter addressed to herself by Shelley since her sister's decease, in which he referred to Mary as the lady whose union with him she—Eliza Westbrook—"might excusably regard as the cause of her sister's ruin." She further takes oath that the books now exhibited to the Lord Chancellor—"Queen Mab," and the "Letter to Lord Ellenborough, occasioned by the sentence which he passed on Mr. D. I. Eaton, as publisher of the Third Part of Paine's 'Age of Reason'"—were written and published by Shelley, she having frequently seen the manuscript of these books in his handwriting, and having repeatedly seen him engaged in writing the same. The second affidavit confirms on oath several particulars put forward in the children's Bill of Complaint.\*

On January 18, Shelley filed his answer to this Bill of Complaint. The alleged desertion of his first wife is clearly and positively denied. "This Defendant saith that the said Complainants are the only issue of the said marriage, and that after the birth of the said Complainant Eliza Ianthe Shelley, this Defendant and his said late wife agreed, in consequence of certain differences between them, to live separate and apart from each other, but this Defendant denies that he deserted his said wife, otherwise than by separating from her as afore-said." What follows is of sufficient importance to be set before the reader without abbreviation :—

\* It should be noticed that the children appear as the plaintiffs in this case, while Mr. and Miss Westbrook, Mr. Higham, and Mr. Robert Farthing Beauchamp (whom Eliza Westbrook afterwards married) appear together with Shelley and Sir Timothy Shelley, as defendants. The letters exhibited, which it would be most important to recover, seem to be lost or to have been destroyed. It was not the practice to file exhibits.

"And this Defendant says that at the urgent entreaty of his said late wife he permitted his said children to reside with her under her management and protection, after her separation from this Defendant, although this Defendant saith he was very anxious, from his affection for his said children, to have had them with him under his own care and management during his said wife's life, but that he forbore so to do in compliance with the wishes of his wife and on account of their tender age, intending nevertheless to have them under his own care, and to provide for their education himself, as soon as they should be of a proper age, or in case of the death of his said wife, and never having in any manner abandoned or deserted them, or had any intention of so doing."

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It may be, Shelley goes on to say, that since their mother's death the children have been in the care and protection of Mr. Westbrook and his daughter; but if so, it has been against their father's will; where they have been clandestinely placed, he knows not, nor can ascertain. That he is now unlawfully cohabiting with Mary Godwin he denies; she is at the present time his lawful wife. Since his parting from his first wife the children may indeed have been supported partly by their mother and partly by Mr. Westbrook; but if this was the case, he, the Defendant, was a contributor to their support, for on receiving in June, 1815, the allowance of one thousand a year from his father, he immediately appropriated a fifth part of that annual income to the use of his wife, and forwarded to her through his solicitor the sum of two hundred pounds to discharge her debts.

"And this Deponent further says he admits that since the death of the said Harriet Shelley, he, this Defendant, hath demanded that the said Complainants should be delivered up to him, and that he intends, if he can, to get possession of their persons and educate them as he thinks proper, which he intends to do virtuously and properly, and to provide also for their support and maintenance, in a manner suitable to their birth

CHAP. and prospects in the world, and to the best of his judgment  
 III. and ability. And this Defendant humbly submits and insists  
 Jan. 1817— that, being the father, he is also the natural guardian of his said  
 July, 1818. children, and that as it is his duty to provide for their main-  
 tenance and education, so it is also his right so to do, and to  
 have the custody of the persons of his said children, as well as  
 the superintendence and management of their education. . . .  
 And this Defendant says that the said Complainants are of  
 such tender age that they cannot, from any reasonable ground  
 of objection on their part, be desirous that they should not be  
 placed in the custody of this Defendant, not being of sufficient  
 age, as this Defendant submits and insists, to judge for them-  
 selves either as to that or any other circumstance that can  
 affect their future prospects or welfare in life. And this  
 Defendant humbly submits and insists that he is exclusively  
 entitled to the custody and care of his said children, and that  
 he ought not to be deprived thereof, or to have his just rights as  
 their father and natural guardian taken from him or abridged,  
 and that the said Complainants ought to be delivered up to  
 him.” \*

Thus on either side the clouds were preparing their artillery  
 of legal thunders as they drew towards each other, and the  
 learned men of law addressed themselves to “wrangle, brangle,  
 jangle” —

“Pages of proof this way, and that way proof” —

while behind the formal phrases and the ceremonies of justice  
 were eager human passions and hearts aflame with hatred and  
 with love. For the Westbrooks the most distinguished leader of  
 the Chancery bar, Sir Samuel Romilly, a man as eminent by  
 his character as by his talents, was engaged.† Shelley was not

\* A “Replication” by the Plaintiffs to Shelley’s answer to the Bill of Com-  
 plaint was filed, but this is a merely formal document.

† It is perhaps worth noting that Romilly had been member of Parliament  
 —on the Whig side—for the borough of Horsham, and was therefore probably  
 acquainted with Shelley’s family.

so fortunate. His chief counsel, Mr. Wetherell, who a little later became conspicuous by his volunteered defence of Thistlewood, Watson, and others, charged with high treason, was a speaker of more volubility than argumentative power. Mr. Basil Montagu, in some of his opinions a zealous disciple of Godwin, and hence, probably, regarded with favour by Shelley, though not eminent as a pleader, was learned, industrious, and of excellent judgment; in private life a man full of refined culture and benevolence, in manners at once stately and genial. Rough Mr. Bell, with his north-country brogue and uneasy way of speech, was on the same side, and brought some subtlety and much patience to the aid of any cause which he undertook. But in legal experience, prudence, skill, and impressiveness as a speaker, Romilly had hardly an equal at the English bar.

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Mr. Wetherell's brief, prepared by Longdill, is still in existence, and some of the "Observations" on the Bill of Complaint indicate the line of argument which it was intended to take. "Little," it is admitted, "can be said in defence of 'Queen Mab.' It was, however, written and printed by Mr. Shelley when he was only nineteen, and as to the publication of it, it was merely distributed to some few of his personal friends; not twenty ever got abroad. The copy referred to by Miss Westbrooke appears to be one which Mr. Shelley confidentially gave to his late wife. Mr. Shelley has not been able to get a copy of his 'Letter to Lord Ellenborough.' A very few copies of that were printed, and none ever publicly circulated.

"Notwithstanding Mr. Shelley's violent philippics against the 'despotism of marriage' as a contract 'against delicacy and reason,' and as a system 'hostile to human happiness,' and notwithstanding his anticipated delights of the free enjoyment of 'choice and change,' which would result from the 'abolition of marriage' (see page 147 *et seq.* of 'Queen Mab'), Mr. Shelley marries twice before he is twenty-five! He is no

CHAP. III. sooner liberated from the despotic chains, which he speaks of  
 Jan. 1817- with so much horror and contempt, than he forges a new set,  
 July, 1818. and becomes again a willing victim of this horrid despotism !  
 It is hoped that a consideration of this marked difference  
 between his speculative opinions and his actions will induce  
 the Lord Chancellor not to think very seriously of this boyish  
 and silly, but certainly unjustifiable, publication of 'Queen  
 Mab.'

"There appears to be no case in point in which the Chancellor has exercised his right of taking children from the care of their father on account of his religious or irreligious opinions *alone*. The objection as to the adulterous connection with Miss Godwin is at an end, and certainly no danger is *at present* to be apprehended as to the effect which the religious principles of the father may have on the minds of the children.

"As a question involving the worldly interest of the children, it is conceived that the Lord Chancellor should in this case be very cautious how he exerts the power which he is now called upon to exercise. Mr. Shelley is the eldest son and heir of Sir Timothy Shelley, Baronet, and as such is, under the family settlements, tenant in tail of the Shelley estates in Sussex, which are probably of the value of £80,000. In these estates he has, by suffering a recovery, obtained a base fee, and he has besides not very remote prospects of a still larger inheritance. If the effect of taking these children (one of whom he has never seen) from his care should be an estrangement of all feelings of parental affection on one hand, and of filial piety on the other, it is much to be feared that he may be led to look on the children which he may have by his present wife (by whom he has one born during the late Mrs. Shelley's life) as the sole objects of his affection, as well as of his pecuniary consideration.

"Part of the prayer of the petition is that Mr. and Miss Westbrooke should be appointed guardians. That part of the prayer, it is presumed, cannot, in the present state of the

affair, be granted, but it is thought right to say that Mr. Westbrooke formerly kept a coffee-house, and is certainly in no respect qualified to be the guardian of Mr. Shelley's children. To Miss Westbrooke there are more decided objections: she is illiterate and vulgar, and what is perhaps a still greater objection, it was by her advice, and with her active concurrence, and it may be said by her *management*, that Mr. Shelley, when of the age of nineteen, ran away with Miss Harriet Westbrooke, then of the age of seventeen, and married her in Scotland. Miss Westbrooke, the proposed guardian, was then nearly thirty, and if she had acted as she ought to have done as the guardian and friend of her younger sister, all this misery and disgrace to both families would have been avoided."

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On Friday, January 24, 1817, the case was heard before Lord Eldon. Between Percy Bysshe Shelley and John Scott, son of the Newcastle coal-fitter, and now Lord Chancellor of England, there were not many points in common. The most profound lawyer and the highest lyrical genius of the age stood by nature and training sufficiently wide apart; but at least two points in common they had—each in early youth had fled to Scotland, there to celebrate a runaway marriage, and each had rashly forfeited his position and privileges as a member of University College, Oxford.\* Before a more cautious, deliberate, and painstaking judge the case of Shelley's children could not have come. In the first hearing of the case stress was laid by Sir Samuel Romilly upon Shelley's religious or irreligious opinions, as set forth in "Queen Mab," on which it was afterwards found expedient to insist less strongly. The defence lay chiefly with Mr. Montagu, and was made in a most impressive and spirited manner. "Queen Mab," he contended, had never been published; it was one of those works of the brain that a man creates for his own amusement, without

\* Scott, afterwards Lord Eldon, had been a fellow of the college, and forfeited his fellowship in consequence of his marriage.

CHAP. III. intending to send them out to the world. A man for his  
 Jan. 1817- amusement might write many things which he intended that  
 July, 1818. his children should never see. Why, then, should the outcome  
 of his mind, although in caricature, bereave him of his paternal  
 rights? Moved by such considerations as these, his lordship,  
 he had no doubt, would dismiss the petition with costs. Lord  
 Eldon's Chancery rule of *festina lente* was not violated on the  
 present occasion. He would take home the petition and affi-  
 davits, he said, and give his decision on a future day. Further  
 hearings of the case should be held, not in the public court, but  
 in the Lord Chancellor's private room.\*

Although the Lord Chancellor would pronounce no decision,  
 the result of the day's proceedings were held to be unfavour-  
 able to Shelley. While he in London watched the progress of  
 the affair, Mary waited anxiously at Bath for tidings. "My  
 William's birthday," she writes in her journal on January 24  
 (the day on which the case was heard). "How many chances  
 have occurred during this little year! May the ensuing one be  
 more peaceful, and my William's star be a fortunate one to rule  
 the decision of this day. Alas! I fear it will be put off, and  
 the influence of the star pass away. Read the 'Arcadia' and

\* I have followed the report given in the *Globe* of January 25, 1817. By  
 some accident Mr. Montagu's speech was assigned by the newspapers to Sir A.  
 Pigott, the senior King's Counsel, who was not engaged on either side.

The *Examiner* for January 26, 1817, contains a paragraph with reference to  
 the Chancery case, from which the following is an extract:—

"A cause is now privately pending before the Chancellor, which involves con-  
 siderations of the greatest importance to all the most tolerant and best affections  
 of humanity, public and private. It is of a novel description, and not only  
 threatens to exhibit a most impolitic distinction between the prince and the  
 subject, but trenches already upon questions which the progress of liberality and  
 self-knowledge has been tacitly supposed to have swept aside, and the return of  
 which would be bringing new and frightful obstacles in the way of the general  
 harmony. But it remains to see, by the result, whether we shall be under the  
 painful necessity of recurring to it.

"We have given a short report of the above case from the *Morning Chronicle*.  
 As the reporters were not admitted, that report must have been from hearsay,  
 and is consequently brief and not quite accurate."

See the *Examiner* of Sunday, February 2, p. 75, for corrections of the report  
 given in the preceding number.

‘Amadis;’ walk with my sweet babe.” And on the following day: “Saturday, January 25.—An unhappy day. I receive bad news, and determine to go up to London”—a determination carried into effect without delay. “Mary has written to you, dearest Claire, in better spirits,” wrote Shelley, in a letter bearing the postmark of January 30, “and, as a reward of her good spirits, with better news than I; in fact, that about Hunt was overruled; it only serves to exhibit the malice of these monsters.\* I have little doubt in my own mind but that they will succeed in the criminal part of the business—I mean that some such punishment as imprisonment and fine will be awarded me by a jury; but do not disquiet yourself, dear, nor allow this to be a matter of present agitation to you. It is not a thing that can be decided [for] six months—an interval pregnant with many [hopes and] fears, † and, if well cultivated, fruitful in joys which might make a bower of roses of the worst dungeon that tyranny could invent. Don’t tease yourself, Claria. The greatest good you can do me is to keep well and quiet yourself, and of that you are well aware.”

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As the case proceeded, the stress of the argument shifted from a consideration of Shelley’s theological or anti-theological creed to that of his avowed opinions respecting the institution of marriage, and his conduct taken in connection with those opinions. It was probably soon after the first day of hearing that Shelley himself drew up a statement to be laid before the Court—a statement which received the advantage of Godwin’s criticism, and to which Godwin afterwards referred as exhibiting the powers of Shelley’s mind to greater advantage than did his ideal romance of history in verse, the “Laon and Cythna.” To its author his prophetic poem, embodying all his most cherished convictions, all his most ardent feelings,

\* I am unable to explain this. In the journal, January 28, 1817, Mary writes, “Go with Shelley to Montagu’s; he is frightened with a letter concerning Hunt, but it is all nothing.”

† The words in brackets are inserted to fill conjecturally gaps caused by a tear in the letter.



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seemed to have grown "from the agony and bloody sweat of intellectual travail," and his Chancery paper to be but "a forced, cold, unimpassioned and insignificant piece of cramped and cautious argument."\* It may be of this Chancery paper that Mary writes in her journal of February 2: "Read 'Tales of my Landlord;' walk with Papa; *write out Shelley's Declaration.*"† A rough draft of a fragment of this document in Shelley's handwriting still exists, with many erasures and alterations, and with comments curt, decisive, and by no means flattering in the writing of Godwin. "I understand," wrote Shelly, "the opinions which I hold on religious matters to be abandoned as a ground of depriving me of the guardianship of my children; the allegations from which this unfitness is argued to proceed are reduced to a simple statement of my holding doctrines inimical to the institution of marriage as established in this country, and my having contravened in practice, as well as speculation, that institution. If I have attacked religion, it is agreed that I am punishable, but not by the loss of my children; if I have imagined a system of social life inconsistent with the constitution of England, I am punishable, but not by the loss of my children.

"I understand that ‡ I am to be declared incapable of the most sacred of human duties and the most inestimable of human rights, because I have reasoned against the institution of marriage in its present state; because I have in my own person violated that institution, and because I have justified that violation by my reasoning.§ The argument of my adver-

\* Shelley to Godwin, December 11, 1817.

† But for this entry in Mrs. Shelley's journal I might have assigned Shelley's manuscript fragment to a date nearer that of Lord Eldon's judgment of March, 1817; and I am still uncertain as to whether it may not belong to such a later date. It is possible, however, that (as in the case of Shelley's "Wat Tyler") the Lord Chancellor, on reading the petition, etc., gave a second hearing of the case.

‡ Shelley had written, "I understand that it is argued that," which Godwin strikes out, substituting the words printed above, with the comment, "This is all tautology," which may perhaps have been intended to apply to the whole sentence, which Godwin surrounds with brackets.

§ An unfinished sentence in brackets I omit.

saries, then, as it presents itself to the Lord Chancellor's mind, reduces itself, I imagine, to this plain consideration—not whether I shall teach my children religious infidelity, not whether I shall teach them political heterodoxy, but whether I shall educate them in immodest and loose sentiments of sexual connexion. I feel that on this particular point I ought to be heard in explanation.

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“The institutions and opinions of all ages and countries have admitted in various degrees the principle of divorce. They have admitted that the sexual connexion once having taken place may be dissolved by some cause, which, according to their respective maxims, are to be considered destructive of the design of its institution—adultery, incompatibility of temper, difference of religion, madness, have all been established by different codes as conditions under which the parties to this union might be free to amend their choice. [Milton's name is here written, and a pen drawn through it.] Selden, perhaps the most learned man and the greatest lawyer this country has produced, and other illustrious writers have already vindicated these doctrines with impunity. My reasonings, I solemnly affirm, amount to as much and no more than I here state. I consider the institution of marriage, as it exists precisely in the laws and opinions of this country, a mischievous and tyrannical institution, and shall express publicly the reasonings on which that persuasion is founded. If I am judged to be an improper guardian for my children on this account, no men of a liberal and inquiring spirit will remain in the community, who, if they are not more free from human feelings or more fortunate in their development and growth than most men can sincerely state their own to be, must not for some protest against the opinions of the multitude, equivalent to my tenets, live in the daily terror lest a court of justice should be converted into an instrument of private vengeance, and its edicts be directed, under some remote allegement of public good, against the most deep and sacred interests of his heart.

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"I am aware of the nature of the institution of marriage in this country, and that the opinions exist which give its vitality to that institution. [Godwin comments, 'This is sadly expressed. It is about as significant as if you said, "I am aware the sun rises every Monday."' ] So far as my own practice has been concerned, I have done my utmost in my peculiar situation to accommodate myself to the feelings of the community, as expressed in these opinions and laws. It was matter of the deepest grief to me, to instance my particular case, that, at the commencement of my union with the present Mrs. Shelley, I was legally married to a woman of whom delicacy forbids me to say more than that we were disunited by incurable dissensions, and rendered incapable, by that marriage contracted at eighteen years of age [from the word 'and' to 'age' has a pen-stroke drawn through it], of exhibiting to the world, according to those formalities which the world requires, that my motives of preference towards my present wife arose from no light or frivolous attachment, but such as in their sense of the word, as well as in mine, I wish to express by the word wife [from 'but such' to 'word wife' is struck out]; and that these feelings were sincere, and that I gave weight to public opinion, there can be no better proof than that immediately on the death of my late wife, I married the lady whose previous connexion with me, alleged to be the consequence, not of the common affections of human nature, but of my peculiar tenets, is now to be made the ground of depriving me of my children [from 'alleged' to end of sentence is struck out, and the following inserted and again struck out: 'I protest against my previous connexion with her being interpreted into a consequence of my peculiar tenets.']

"My notions of the education of my children, with respect——" [*Fragment ends.*]

It is noticeable that while Shelley's counsel argued that the views set forth in the notes to "Queen Mab" were or might have been no more than the idle speculations of a boy, Shelley

himself, with greater candour, admits that his opinions on marriage, as at present instituted, differ from those accepted in English society, adding, however, that he had in his practice accommodated himself to the feelings of the community.

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On March 27\* Lord Eldon gave his judgment. Fully aware of its importance as a precedent, he determined to place his decision with all due care on record, and so great a lawyer was little likely to fall into the error of resting that decision on weaker ground when firmer might be chosen. He would not pronounce that the father should be deprived of his children, and that they should be handed over to the Westbrooks. It might be that Shelley would name fit and proper persons by whom the children should be educated. All that the Chancellor at present could see his way to decide was that the children must not be placed in the exclusive care of their father, and that until a proper plan for their maintenance and education should be proposed and should be approved by the Court, Shelley must be restrained from taking possession of their persons. It was not because Shelley held atheistical opinions that the Chancellor so decided; it was not because he held opinions opposed to the institution of marriage. Nor was it Shelley's conduct in leaving his wife, and during her life entering into an irregular union with Mary Godwin, on which Lord Eldon based his judgment. It was neither opinions nor conduct taken alone that determined the Chancellor to place the children under the protection of the Court. It was these two taken together—opinions leading to conduct; opinions avowed, or at least not disavowed, leading directly to conduct which the law of the land pronounced to be immoral. "There is nothing in evidence before me," so ran the words of the judgment, "sufficient to authorize me in thinking that this gentleman has changed, before he arrived at the age of twenty-

\* March 17 is the date given in Jacob's Reports, but two of the documents connected with the case refer to the date as March 27. Jacob's date was given probably by an error of the press.

CHAP. five, the principles he avowed at nineteen. I think there is  
 III. ample evidence in the papers, and in conduct, that no such  
 Jan. 1817- change has taken place.  
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"I shall studiously forbear in this case, because it is unnecessary, to state in judgment what this Court might or might not be authorized to do, in the due exercise of its jurisdiction, upon the grounds of the probable effect of a father's principles of any nature whatever upon the education of his children, where such principles have not yet been called into activity or manifested in such conduct in life, as this Court, upon such an occasion as the present, would be bound to attend to. . . .

"This is a case in which, as the matter appears to me, the father's principles cannot be misunderstood; in which his conduct, which I cannot but consider as highly immoral, has been established in proof, and established as the effect of those principles; conduct, nevertheless, which he represents to himself and others not as conduct to be considered as immoral, but to be recommended and observed in practice, and as worthy of approbation.

"I consider this, therefore, as a case in which a father has demonstrated that he must and does deem it to be matter of duty which his principles impose upon him, to recommend, to those whose opinions and habits he may take upon himself to form, that conduct, in some of the most important relations of life, as moral and virtuous which the law calls upon me to consider as immoral and vicious—conduct which the law animadverts upon as inconsistent with the duties of persons in such relations of life, and which it considers as injuriously affecting both the interests of such persons and those of the community.

"I cannot, therefore, think that I should be justified in delivering over these children for their education exclusively to what is called the care to which Mr. Shelley wishes it to be entrusted.

"If I am wrong in this judgment which I have formed in this painful case, I have the consolation to recollect that my judgment is not final. . . .

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"In what degree and to what extent the Court will interfere in this case against paternal authority cannot be finally determined till after the Master's report."

Such was Lord Eldon's judgment, which was accompanied by an injunction restraining Shelley from intermeddling with the children until the further order of the Court. Meanwhile Mr. Alexander, one of the Masters in Chancery, was to inquire as to a proper plan for the children's maintenance and education, and as to the selection of proper persons in whose care they should be placed during their minority.

The main battle was fought, and Shelley had suffered a defeat; but it still remained to be determined whether the nominees of the Westbrooks should be entrusted with the education of little Ianthe and Charles, or whether the persons proposed on Shelley's behalf might not be preferred. Mr. Westbrook and his daughter did not themselves desire to undertake the arduous duty of rearing and educating a boy of two years old and a girl of three. The children being in the hands of the Rev. John Kendall, a schoolmaster of Warwick, in his hands the Westbrooks were content to leave them. Kendall was a man of good talents and learning—so declared Dr. Parr, the eminent Greek scholar; his wife was a lady of high character and amiable manners; and the Miss Kendalls, first, second, and third, were all possessed of superior attainments in literature. On Shelley's part it was proposed (June 21) that the children should be entrusted to the care of Mr. and Mrs. Longdill (in the present case Longdill had acted as Shelley's solicitor); whatever sum was needful for their maintenance and education, over and above the eighty pounds a year provided by Mr. Westbrook, Shelley undertook to supply.

When, on August 1, Mr. Alexander gave in his report to the Lord Chancellor, it seemed as if Shelley were about to

CHAP. III. suffer a second and final defeat, for the report expressed an opinion in favour of the Westbrooks' proposal. No objection against Mr. Longdill was raised, except that his position as Shelley's solicitor disqualified him for the duty of loyally carrying out the directions of the Court. Mr. Kendall was to Shelley a complete stranger; the effect of placing the children with him *in loco parentis* would be to dissolve all ties between them and their father. He had proposed no plan for their education, as intended by the order of the Court. It seemed to Shelley that although his right to the personal care of his children and to the direction of their education had been suspended, he had not lost the right of nominating or appointing the person to whom they should be entrusted, provided that person were free from all reasonable objections. These considerations having been set forth in a petition from Shelley, the Chancellor perceived their justice, and ordered, on November 10, that the matter should be referred back to the Master to receive further proposals as to a proper person under whose care the infants should remain during their minority, or until further order of the Court.\*

Other proposals, accordingly, were made on Shelley's part, and on the part of the Westbrooks. The Rev. Jacob Cheesborough, of Ulcomb, in Kent, who also held a vicarage in Cheshire, now displaces the Warwick schoolmaster; and instead of Longdill, Dr. and Mrs. Hume, persons of unexcep-

\* On August 2, the infant petitioners prayed that the Master's report should be confirmed. Shelley thereupon petitioned against Kendall and in favour of Longdill.

On August 26, Messrs. Hart, Horne, Wetherell, and Montagu were heard in Lord Eldon's private room on the exceptions to the Master's report. See *Morning Chronicle* for August 27, and for September 1, which corrects errors of August 27, probably in consequence of a paragraph which appeared in the *Examiner* of August 31 (p. 552, col. 2).

On September 20, Shelley received from Longdill a letter drawn up by Longdill and requiring Shelley's signature, addressed to the Lord Chancellor, and requesting him to allow the children to go on a visit of a fortnight to Mr. Longdill's family, in order that their father might have some short and unrestrained intercourse with them. Whether a copy of this letter was sent to the Chancellor does not appear.

tionable orthodoxy, were proposed by Shelley. Dr. Hume resided at Brent End Lodge, Hanwell, and was physician to his Majesty's forces, and to his Royal Highness the Duke of Cambridge. He would place the boy, when seven years of age, at a good private school, whence he should pass to a public school and one of the universities. In the choice of a school Dr. Hume would prefer one under the superintendence of an orthodox clergyman of the Church of England. The girl should be educated at home by Mrs. Hume, with the assistance, when needful, of suitable masters. Dr. and Mrs. Hume would be very positive on the absolute necessity of disregarding and resisting the fashions of the day in dress. They would keep the girl from the perusal of any such books as might tend to shake her faith in any of the great points of the established religion; but they would to a certain extent encourage the reading, and indeed the studying, of some of our best poets (the author of "Alastor" was not specially named as one of these); but with respect to Pope and Shakespeare, Dr. Hume would see that the girl was furnished only with selections or an expurgated text. He believed also that an edition of his namesake's "History of England" had lately been published, in which his insidious attacks on religion were omitted, and with this edition Dr. Hume would take care that Ianthe was provided. To a morning and evening prayer and thanksgiving, and to grace before and after meals, Dr. and Mrs. Hume would regularly accustom the children, and would take occasion, as circumstances might arise, to inculcate on them a general religious feeling, without bringing to their notice controversial points apt to excite doubts which they would be unable to solve. All this, and much besides, Dr. and Mrs. Hume would undertake for the modest consideration of £100 apiece for the infants, £80 being derived from Mr. Westbrook's £2000 four per cent. annuities, and £120 being payable by the children's father.

To such a proposal Mr. Alexander could offer no objection.

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CHAP. On April 28, 1818, when Shelley and Mary were in Milan, the  
 III. Master reported in favour of Dr. and Mrs. Hume; and in spite  
 Jan. 1817- of a petition from the Westbrooks, praying that Mr. Alexander  
 July, 1818. should review his report, that report was confirmed by the  
 Chancellor on July 25. As to the interference with Shelley's  
 parental authority, the Court acted with as much consideration  
 for his feelings as was consistent with a determination to allow  
 him no opportunity of inculcating on the children his peculiar  
 opinions. He might visit them once in each month, the inter-  
 view to take place in the presence of Dr. and Mrs. Hume, or, if  
 more convenient to him, since he might desire to travel abroad  
 his visits might be when he pleased, provided that their number  
 did not exceed twelve in a year. Should he desire further  
 intercourse with his children, it was open to him to apply to  
 the Court. As to the Westbrooks, the number of their visits  
 to the children was also limited to twelve, but the presence  
 of Dr. and Mrs. Hume was not required on those occasions.  
 Finally, as to Sir Timothy Shelley and his family, perfect  
 freedom of intercourse with either or both of the children was  
 granted.

From Lord Eldon's point of view the decision was not  
 unjust. Shelley had put forth extravagant opinions on the  
 subject of marriage; he had not disavowed them; his conduct  
 seemed to have proceeded from them; and he might be  
 expected to inculcate on his children those opinions, leading,  
 in great relations of life, to conduct which the law pronounced  
 immoral. It was not to be expected that the Chancellor should  
 discover, by inspiration or some intuition of genius, all that  
 was gentle, beautiful, and elevated in Shelley's character or  
 Shelley's creed; or that he should be able to estimate, as we  
 are able, all the gains to be derived by little Charles and  
 Ianthe from the sweet communities of such a father's love, or  
 from the pure and high influencings of his genius. Nor could  
 he be aware how in Mary Shelley they would have found a  
 mother tender, wise, and faithful. Lord Eldon acted sternly

indeed, but, according to the evidence laid before him, not unjustly, the justice being such as may be expected from a tribunal incapable of dealing with the finer issues of human life.\*

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\* *Shelley's will.* Shelley's will was executed on February 18, 1817. Byron and Peacock were appointed executors. A sum of £6000 was assigned as a provision for his son Charles Bysshe; a like sum as that for his daughter Ianthe; a like sum as that for his son William; these sums being bequeathed in trust to Byron and Peacock for the children's benefit. The sum of £6000 was bequeathed to Miss Clairmont; a second sum of £6000 was bequeathed to the executors in trust, to be invested in the purchase of an annuity for the term of Miss Clairmont's life, and the life of such other person as she may name. (Allegra was perhaps meant.) The sum of £2000 was bequeathed to Hogg, and £2000 to Byron; £500 to Peacock; the executors, besides, to invest £2000 in purchase of an annuity, payable quarterly, for the term of Peacock's life, and the life of such other person as he may name. To his wife Shelley bequeathed all his "manors, messuages, lands, tenements, hereditaments, and real estate, both freehold and copyhold, whether in possession, reversion, remainder, or expectancy," and also all his "monies, stocks, funds, and securities for money, mortgages in fee, and for years, and the lands, tenements, and hereditaments therein comprised for all his interest and estate therein," and all his goods, chattels, and personal estates whatsoever. It has been said that the second sum of £6000 was left to Miss Clairmont by an error in drawing up the document; but this statement seems to be unproved. I have to thank Mr. Forman for allowing me to examine his copy of the will.

## CHAPTER IV.

## SHELLEY AT MARLOW.

CHAP. IV. WHILE the Westbrooks were at work preparing their case for hearing in the Court of Chancery, in the early days of January, 1817, Shelley left his wife with Claire at Bath, and was in consultation with his legal advisers in London. During his absence, on January 12, was born the daughter of Byron and Claire Clairmont—an infant of unusual beauty, with eyes of deep blue, baby-mouth exquisitely shaped, and form of perfect symmetry. Until some one with a better right to bestow a Christian designation should rename the babe, they would call her by a name that resembled Albè's, and at the same time expressed the brightness of her opening beauty and sensibility—Alba, or the Dawn. The good news of Claire's safety and that of her child was needed to cast a gleam on the gloom that encompassed Shelley. The last autumn had left dread memories to haunt his spirit. To the circumstances of Harriet's death, so full of appalling horror, he dared hardly, he says, advert in thought. "For a time," says Leigh Hunt, that event "tore his being to pieces." And this had followed hard upon the death of Fanny Godwin, which affected him, he declares, far more deeply. Now his children, more than ever dear, were to be objects of contention, perhaps to be won after long struggle, perhaps to be wholly lost to him. And might it not happen that he should himself be imprisoned as a revolutionist and an atheist? Might not his fortune, as

author of "Queen Mab," be to stand, as Eaton had stood, from day to day in the pillory? Such were Shelley's apprehensions in January, and though he understood that he might purchase victory by recantation, he would choose any penalty rather than such a triumph. These, indeed, were overheated apprehensions; yet they were natural to a time of terror and reaction. A little later Cobbett fled for safety to America. Nor could Shelley know that there lived in Englishmen the spirit which, before the year was out, rose against the prosecution of Hone for blasphemous libel, and procured the acquittal of Watson, Thistlewood, and Hooper from the charge of treason.

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Hopes, however, alternated with fears; and it was with confidence in a successful issue to the contest for his children that Shelley wrote to Mary in Bath, on January 11.

*Shelley to Mary Shelley.*

London, January 11, 1816 [error for 1817].

MY DEAR LOVE,

I will relate to you all that I have learned and all that has happened first.

I saw Longdill early this morning, and have spent the whole day at his chambers. From him I learned that, after receiving notice from Desse of Chancery proceedings, he had made himself acquainted with the *law of the point*. The only manner in which I could get at the children in the *common course of law* is by *habeas corpus*, and that supposes a delay of some weeks. You will see that the whole thing must be decided in Chancery before that time; and if I could succeed at common law, my situation would be still the same with respect to Chancery, and that possession would in no manner ameliorate, but rather the contrary, my situation. Their process is the most insidiously malignant that can be conceived. They have filed a bill to say that I published "Queen Mab," that I avow myself to be an Atheist and a Republican, with some other imputations of an infamous nature. This, by Chancery law, I must *deny* or *admit* upon oath, and then it seems that it vests in the *mere direction* of the Chancellor to decide whether those are fit grounds for refusing me my children. They cannot have them, at

CHAP. IV. any rate; *my* father or *my* nearest relations are the persons whom  
 Jan. 1817- the Chancellor will entrust with them, if they must be denied to  
 Mar. 1818. me. It is therefore their revenge. If I admit myself, or if  
 Chancery decides that I ought not to have the children, because  
 I am an infidel, then the Westbrooks will make that decision a  
 basis for a criminal information or common libel attack.

But there is hopes by watchful resistance that the whole of this detestable conspiracy will be overthrown. For if the Chancellor should decide not to hear their cause, and if an answer on oath is so convincing as to effect this, they are defeated. They do not tell Harriet's story, I mean the circumstances of her death, in these allegations against me; they evidently [would] but that it makes against themselves. They attack you and Godwin by stating that I became acquainted with you whilst living with Harriet, and that Godwin is the author of "Political Justice," and other impious and seditious writings.

I learn just now from Godwin that he has evidence that Harriet was unfaithful to me *four months* before I left England with you. If we can succeed in establishing this, *our* connection will receive an additional sanction, and plea be overborne. On the 19th the Chancellor begins to sit, and it must be decided instantly from the nature of the case. I know not when, or whether at all, before that day, I can return to Bath. How painful in these difficult, and in one sense tremendous circumstances it is to me to be deprived of the counsel of your judgment and the consolation of your dear presence! I must remain in London; I must attend to every the minutest stage of the answer which is to be drawn up on my side. My story is what I have to tell. My evidence and my witnesses must be collected in the short space of five days; besides, I must be present. How much depends on this! Almost all besides that inviolable happiness which, whilst you and your affection remains to me, can never pass away, is suspended perhaps on the issue of this trial.

*Shelley to Mary Shelley.*

[London; date unascertained.]

Cheer up, my own beloved Mary; I have firm friends here. I am not, as might have happened once, to be oppressed in secrecy and solitude. Depend, too, on the utmost foresight and caution to be used on my part. I am to attend a consultation of counsel early on Monday morning.

How is sweetest babe? How do his fair blue eyes look to-day? CHAP. IV.  
 Kiss him tenderly for me. Jan. 1817—  
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How is poor Clare? Give my love to her, and read her or tell her the substance of my letter. I hope that her spirits are not much [word undeciphered] in her present situation. She will see that in a matter so serious as that in which I am engaged I cannot return.

Now, my darling Pecksie, don't fancy I am disquieted so as to be unwell. Don't think I have any of those misgivings and perturbations which vitally affect the heart. I am, it is true, earnest and active, but as far as relates to all highest hopes and you, my own only treasure, quite happy. So adieu. You shall hear to-morrow night, if possible.

Your own affectionate

SHELLEY.

Don't be disappointed if I send not by the mail. Maybe I can't.

Moved by the thought of Shelley's solitude, and by the ill news of the first morning's proceedings in Chancery, Mary, not without a pang in parting from little William ("I wish Blue Eyes was with me," she exclaims in the diary), started for town on January 26. The days which followed, though full of anxiety, were cheered by the pleasures of social intercourse with Godwin, Hunt, and Hunt's circle of literary acquaintances. While seated in the *Examiner* office, Hunt appeared as the zealous reformer and uncompromising champion of civil liberty; but when evening came he was all brightness, gaiety, and geniality; and with music and song, poetry and wit, the hours sped by. The room was that made bright by Hunt's taste and fancy, as Shelley remembered it when he was an exile in Italy—

"Adorned with many a cast from Shout,  
 With graceful flowers tastefully placed about;  
 And coronals of bay from ribbons hung,  
 And brighter wreaths in neat disorder flung;  
 The gifts of the most learn'd among some dozens  
 Of female friends, sisters-in-law and cousins."

CHAP. IV. That was a memorable evening (February 5) when the three  
 Jan. 1817- "Young Poets" of his *Examiner* article of two months since  
 Mar. 1818. —Reynolds, Keats, and Shelley—supped together at Hampstead with their generous critic. Keats, we are told by Leigh Hunt, "did not take to Shelley as kindly as Shelley did to him. . . . Keats, being a little too sensitive on the score of his origin, felt inclined to see in every man of birth a sort of natural enemy." \* The enthusiasm for abstract ideas by which Shelley was affected was unknown to Keats, who, with power of broad thinking and feeling as yet undeveloped, could lose himself in rich sensation and brooding pleasures in a way never experienced by Shelley. To Keats there appeared to be a thinness in Shelley's poetical work; why could he not pause in his too rapid race, and amass around him the materials of substantial delight? Nor did Hazlitt, whose acquaintance Shelley also made at one of Hunt's supper-parties, feel much drawn towards the eager boyish disputant with whom he discussed the subjects of monarchy and republicanism until three in the morning. Himself oppressed by the passion of ideas, and mingling with these ideas his passionate prejudices, Hazlitt at thirty-eight, a pale anatomy of a man, worn and wan with study, craved in youth more of health and calm and sober certainty of happiness than Shelley, ailing in body and dejected in spirits, seemed to possess. His eye was too preternaturally bright; his voice, in moments of excitement, too keenly vibrating; his cheek lacked the hue of health; his figure drooped or bent forward too much, "like a plant that has been deprived of its vital air." † These physical characteristics, thought Hazlitt, were the symbols of an unwholesome craving after unnatural excitement, a morbid tendency towards interdicted topics, an unwise quest after the hidden secrets of human destiny. He did not know how Shelley, a little

\* Leigh Hunt's Autobiography, chap. xvi. Shelley, I learn from Mrs. Gisborne's journal, disliked J. Hamilton Reynolds.

† For Hazlitt's impression of Shelley, see P. G. Patmore's "My Friends and Acquaintances," vol. iii. p. 134.

more than a year since, had been the robust and joyous oars-  
 man on the Thames; how he had of late endured blow upon  
 blow of almost shattering force; how his health and spirits  
 had suffered; how even now his dearest hopes as a father  
 seemed to him to be desperately at stake.

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With Brougham also, distinguished by his literary work for the *Edinburgh Review*, his great forensic efforts, and the vigorous part he played in the Parliamentary opposition, Shelley now became acquainted. Twice Brougham had defended the proprietors of the *Examiner* in government prosecutions; and, probably by Hunt's advice, Shelley called upon him and consulted him on the Chancery affair. But Brougham, except in consultation, apparently took no part in the proceedings, and the acquaintance never ripened to intimacy.\* One true friend beside Leigh Hunt these days brought to Shelley—a friend whose sound head, generous heart, and manly hand were henceforth, according to his ability, at Shelley's service. The enthusiastic recognition of his genius by one twelve years his senior, and well skilled in forms and fashions of literature, was but one of many good offices rendered to Shelley by Horace Smith.† With the ardour of a poet and the zeal of a political reformer, there mingled in Horace Smith some of the solid judgment and prudence of a city man of business. Nature, said Leigh Hunt in his sonnet, unable to import her fine and fresh graces into the heart of the town, in place of flowers, or trees, or gardens, had, in her “unyielding wish to bless,” planted Horace Smith there—

“And ev'n where Gain huddles her noisiest rout,  
 The smile of her sweet wisdom will break out;  
 For there, dear Horace, has she planted you.”

\* In Godwin's diary we read, “January 30 [1817].—Call w[ith] P. B. S. on Brougham and Wetheral. January 31.—P. B. S. and Leigh Hunt call; consultation: Brougham, B. M. [Basil Montagu], Wetheral, Horne, Longdil.”

† See Horace Smith's ardently felt and ardently expressed sonnet “To the Author of ‘The Revolt of Islam,’” in the *Examiner*, February 8, 1818, afterwards printed with the title, “To Percy Bysshe Shelley on his Poems,” in “*Amarynthus the Nympholept*, etc.,” 1821.



CHAP. IV. His countenance, as Hunt describes it, frank and cordial, sweet without weakness, expressed the qualities of his mind. "I know not what Horace Smith must take me for sometimes," said Shelley. "I am afraid he must think me a strange fellow; but is it not odd, that the only truly generous person I ever knew, who had money to be generous with, should be a stockbroker? And he writes poetry, too," continued Shelley, his voice rising in a fervour of astonishment. "He writes poetry and pastoral dramas, and yet knows how to make money, and does make it, and is still generous." In 1820, when Shelley imagined the best joys of London, which his friend, Maria Gisborne, returned from Italy, would find there, not the least of these, as he conceived, was the society of Horace Smith—

"Wit and sense,  
Virtue and human knowledge; all that might  
Make this dull world a business of delight,  
Are all combined in Horace Smith."

The record in Mary's journal of these early days of 1817 makes us impatient to hear at lesser distance Hunt's piano and his puns; with our own eyes to see him look

"Things wiser than were ever read in book  
Except in Shakespeare's wisest tenderness;"

to catch more than a glimpse of Keats in his season of dawning hope and young achievement—all "the mighty ravishment" of a poetical springtide about him; to listen to Lamb, as he replied with sputtering jest and genial wisdom and quaint learning to the grave profundities of Godwin; to watch Hazlitt's pale face glow, while he laboured to drag to light from its deep lurking-place some eager thought.\*

"*Saturday, February 1.*—Read the 'Arcadia' and the

\* So Talfourd describes Hazlitt in his "Final Memorials of Charles Lamb." Shelley wrote from Italy to Hunt (September 27, 1819), "Of Lamb you know my opinion, and you can bear witness to the regret which I felt when I learned that the calumny of an enemy had deprived me of his society while in England."

'World Underground.' Shelley dines at Skinner Street. In CHAP. IV.  
 the evening Hunt, Mrs. Hunt, and I go to the opera—'Figaro.' Jan. 1817—  
Mar. 1818.  
 I am very much pleased. We sleep at Godwin's.

"*Sunday, February 2.*—A disagreeable conversation with Mrs. Godwin in the morning. Shelley goes to Hunt's. Read 'Tales of my Landlord;' walk with Papa; write out Shelley's Declaration [in the Chancery proceedings].

"*Tuesday, February 4.*—Hear Hunt's music; dine with Hunt, Mrs. Hunt, and Miss K[ent] \* at Godwin's; sleep at Hunt's.

"*Wednesday, February 5.*—Read 'Tales of my Landlord;' walk on the Heath. Messrs. Keats and Reynolds sup at Hampstead.

"*Thursday, February 6.*—Finish 'Tales of my Landlord;' hear Hunt's music; go to town; read Beaumont's 'Hermaphroditus;' sup with Godwin, and have a pleasant conversation with him.

"*Saturday, February 8.*—Shelley and Hunt go to London to attend the Chancery. Read the 'Arcadia;' dine and spend the evening at H. Smith's. The suit is again put off.

"*Sunday, February 9.*—Walk with Shelley and Hunt to Brougham's in the morning; after dinner read the 'Arcadia.' Several of Hunt's acquaintances come in the evening. Music. After supper a discussion until three in the morning with Hazlitt concerning Monarchy and Republicanism.

"*Monday, February 10.*—Read the 'Arcadia;' go to Godwin's. Lambs call there.

"*Tuesday, February 11.*—Read the 'Arcadia.' Shelley attends Chancery; he hears that the question will not come on, and quits the Court; it is argued afterwards, but no judgment given. Mr. Hunt and Miss Kent dine at Godwin's. We go to the play—see the 'Merchant of Venice.' See Miss L[amb?] there. Return to Hunt's to sleep.

"*Wednesday, February 12.*—Not well; read the 'Arcadia.'

\* Hunt's sister-in-law.

CHAP. IV. Shelley goes to the Godwins'. J. and G. Keats drink tea and

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"*Friday, February 14.*—Read the 'Arcadia' and 'Cupid's Revenge.' Shelley reads the 'Arcadia.' He is out all day with Mrs. Hunt.

"*Saturday, February 15.*—Finish the 'Arcadia.' Shelley goes to town. Mr. Keats calls. Walk out. Miss Kent is ill.

"*Sunday, February 6.*—Walk out with Shelley. Mr. and Mrs. Hazlitt, B. Montagu, and Godwin dine; in the evening others come in. Music.

"*Tuesday, February 18.*—Walk out with Mrs. and Mr. Hunt. Clare and William arrive. Conversation and music in the evening."

As a companion in his country rambles in the neighbourhood of Hampstead, Shelley had often by his side his friend's eldest child, little Thornton Hunt. He delighted in the broken ground and fresh air of Hampstead, especially when the north-west wind blew a gale of intoxicating health and freedom. "I went with him rather than with my father," writes Thornton Hunt, "because he walked faster, and talked with me while he walked, instead of being lost in his own thoughts and conversing only at intervals. A love of wandering seemed to possess him in the most literal sense; his rambles appeared to be without design, or any limit but my fatigue; and when I was 'done up' he carried me home in his arms, on his shoulder, or pickback." In Shelley's delight at this time in the companionship of a child there was, perhaps, some of that feeling which he afterwards described in the words—

"The devotion to something afar  
From the sphere of our sorrow."

He was himself suffering in body and in mind. Sudden seizures of agonizing pain left him at times shaken in nerve and exhausted; and his thoughts turned ever anxiously to anticipate the issue of the Chancery struggle. But in the mirth and

gladness of children he found a consolation for his private pain. "I can remember one day at Hampstead," writes his former playfellow; "it was soon after breakfast, and Shelley sat reading, when he suddenly threw up his book and hands, and fell back, the chair sliding sharply from under him, and he poured forth shrieks, loud and continuous, stamping his feet madly on the ground. My father rushed to him, and while the women looked out for the usual remedies of cold water and hand-rubbing, applied a strong pressure to his side [the seat of Shelley's pain], kneading it with his hands; and the patient seemed to be gradually relieved by that process. This happened about the time when he was most anxious for the result of the trial which was to deprive him of his children. In the intervals he sought relief in reading, in conversation—which especially turned upon classic literature—in freedom of thought and action, and in play with the children of the house." To play at "frightful creatures," with rampant paws and terrifying gestures, was a favourite diversion of Shelley's, when, to make his aspect more dreadful, he would screw his long and curling hair in front, until the little ones, snatching a fearful joy, grew alarmed at the realistic monster, and begged him "not to do the horn." Sometimes he would tease little Thornton with provoking banter, while the small boy sat with an arm around him; and once in revenge the boy, looking up in Shelley's face, cried out that he hoped his persecutor would be beaten in the Chancery suit, and have his children taken from him. "I was sitting on his knee," Thornton Hunt relates, "and as I spoke, he let himself fall listlessly back in his chair, without attempting to conceal the shock I had given him. But presently he folded his arms round me and kissed me; and I perfectly understood that he saw how sorry I was, and was as anxious as I was to be friends again." In the background of Shelley's mirth with his pretty comrades lay melancholy thoughts. Once, while watching his paper boats speed across the pond in the Vale of Health, or caught and swamped by its

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CHAP. IV. tiny billows, "How much," said Shelley, smiling, "I should like that we could get into one of these boats and be shipwrecked—it would be a death more to be desired than any other."

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But, in the midst of his anxiety and suffering, the old love of freakish jest would sometimes break forth. "Does Shelley go on telling strange stories of the deaths of kings?" asked Keats of Leigh Hunt, in a letter written in May, 1817. Shelley was fond, Hunt tells us, of quoting a passage from "Richard the Second," in which the king gives fantastic expression to his misery.

"He was once going to town with me in the Hampstead stage, when our only companion was an old lady, who sat silent and still, after the English fashion. . . . Shelley, who had been moved into the ebullition by something objectionable which he thought he saw in the face of our companion, startled her into a look of the most ludicrous astonishment by suddenly calling to mind, and, in his enthusiastic tone of voice, addressing me by name with the first two lines. 'Hunt,' he exclaimed—

"For God's sake! let us sit upon the ground,  
And tell sad stories of the death of kings."

The old lady looked on the coach-floor, as if expecting to see us take our seats accordingly." \*

Shelley's sympathetic delight in the innocent joy of children and all happy creatures did not hinder or check a passion of charity for those who were sufferers, brethren of his own in sorrow, sickness, need. Returning from the opera one fierce winter night, when snow lay white upon heath and hill, Leigh Hunt heard, near his own door, strange and alarming shrieks, mingled with the voice of a man. It was Shelley, who was bearing down the Vale a woman whom he had found near the top of the hill in fits. She had been attend-

\* It is worth comparing this, the true version of the well-known story, with that tricked out by Hogg's wit in his "Life of Shelley," vol. ii. pp. 305, 306.

ing her son, who accompanied her, on a criminal charge CHAP. IV.  
 made against him, and excitement and fatigue had over- Jan. 1817-  
 powered her in the bleak and windy night. Seeking shelter Mar. 1818.  
 for her, Shelley had knocked at door after door, and had found none. It was impossible to admit a stranger—perhaps an impostor. “At last,” Leigh Hunt writes, “my friend sees a carriage driving up to a house at a little distance. The knock is given; the warm door flies open; servants and lights pour forth. Now, thought he, is the time. He puts on his best address . . . and plants himself in the way of an elderly person, who is stepping out of the carriage with his family. He tells his story. They only press on the faster. ‘Will you go and see her?’ ‘No, sir; there’s no necessity for that sort of thing, depend on it. Impostors swarm everywhere; the thing cannot be done. Sir, your conduct is extraordinary.’ ‘Sir,’ cried Shelley, assuming a very different manner, and forcing the astonished householder to stop out of his astonishment, ‘I am sorry to say that *your* conduct is *not* extraordinary; and if my own seems to amaze you, I will tell you something which may amaze you a little more, and I hope will frighten you. It is such men as you who madden the spirits and the patience of the poor and wretched; and if ever a convulsion comes in this country (which is very probable), recollect what I tell you. You will have your house, that you refuse to put this miserable woman into, burnt over your head.’ ‘God bless me, sir! Dear me, sir!’ exclaimed the poor frightened man, and fluttered into his mansion.” Sheltered and warmed and fed by Hunt and Shelley, and cared for by a doctor whom they procured, the woman recovered. “The next day,” says Hunt, “my friend sent mother and son comfortably home to Hendon, where they were known, and whence they returned him thanks full of gratitude.” \*

\* This well-known story, given in Hunt’s Autobiography, chap. xv., was first told in 1823, in the *Literary Examiner*, No. viii. (August 23), “On the Suburbs of

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Shelley's concern for his fellows was not confined to individual and private cases of want and suffering. England, in 1817, was full of misery and feverish agitation. The seasons of the preceding year had been unfavourable to agricultural produce. The great war, a customer in the markets to the amount of fifty millions, was at an end. Many hands had been thrown out of employment by the introduction of machinery, and continental nations were learning to compete successfully with England. Agitators used their opportunity to stir up the spirit of sedition, and the government, in alarm, was disposed to accept the suborned testimony of spies, which transformed every liberal club and every knot of pot-house politicians into a centre of treason. The windows of the state-carriage in which the Prince Regent returned from opening Parliament had been broken by a missile; and the popgun plot was made the occasion for a secret committee, and the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. In Manchester, the ragged Blanketeers gathered and prepared to march on London. Loyal and patriotic writers like Southey pleaded that England, having achieved her great deliverance, and the deliverance of Europe from the tyranny of Napoleon, needed before all else to maintain her strength by internal union, by the suppression of factious disturbance, and by a wise but gradual reform. Men of a different temper declaimed against the war of European liberation as a profligate and purposeless attack upon the French people, and urged that England, now at last awakened to her internal misery and servitude, should on the instant reform root and branch. The editor of the *Examiner* was a conspicuous opponent of the government of the Regent, Sidmouth and Castlereagh; and Shelley applauded his friend for the part he took in public

Genoa and the Country about London." In John Dix's "Pen and Ink Sketches of Poets, Preachers, and Politicians" (1846), chap. viii., he represents himself as present at the scene of Shelley's expostulation with the elderly gentleman. It was, he says, a Sunday night; but we know that it was not so, for Hunt was returning from the opera.

affairs. But, with all Shelley's ardent hopes and visions, there was in him a certain moderation of temper and opinion which preserved him from the extreme views of the Hampden Clubs and of Major Cartwright. "Abstractedly," he admitted, "it is the right of every human being to have a share in the government;" abstractedly it can be shown that a pure republic is "the system of social order the fittest to produce the happiness and promote the genuine eminence of man." But the surest method of arriving at beneficial innovations "is to proceed gradually and with caution," else in place of order and freedom "anarchy and despotism will follow." "Nothing," said Shelley, "can less consist with reason, or afford smaller hopes of any beneficial issue, than the plan which should abolish the regal or aristocratical branches of our constitution, before the public mind, through many gradations of improvement, shall have arrived at the maturity which can disregard these symbols of its childhood."\* And as to universal suffrage, it was at present rather to be dreaded than desired. "I confess," Shelley wrote, "I consider its adoption, in the present unprepared state of public knowledge and feeling, a measure fraught with peril. I think that none but those who register their names as paying a certain small sum in *direct taxes* ought, at present, to send members to Parliament." An extension of the franchise, within due limits and annual parliaments, might reasonably be demanded at once by the voice of the nation. But how to make that voice audible? How, save by a plebiscite, the votes of the people for or against reform to be collected by a system of visitation from door to door throughout the length and breadth of Great Britain and Ireland. To defray the expenses which must attend such a method of obtaining a plebiscite on the question of reform, Shelley was himself prepared to lay down one hundred pounds, the tenth part of his annual income. His convictions and practical suggestions, together with this offer of aid to carry them into effect, were

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\* "A Proposal for putting Reform to the Vote."



CHAP. IV. set forth in the pamphlet "A Proposal for putting Reform to the Vote throughout the Kingdom," issued in March, 1817, by the brothers James and Charles Ollier, young publishers to whom Shelley had probably been introduced by their common friend, Leigh Hunt.\*

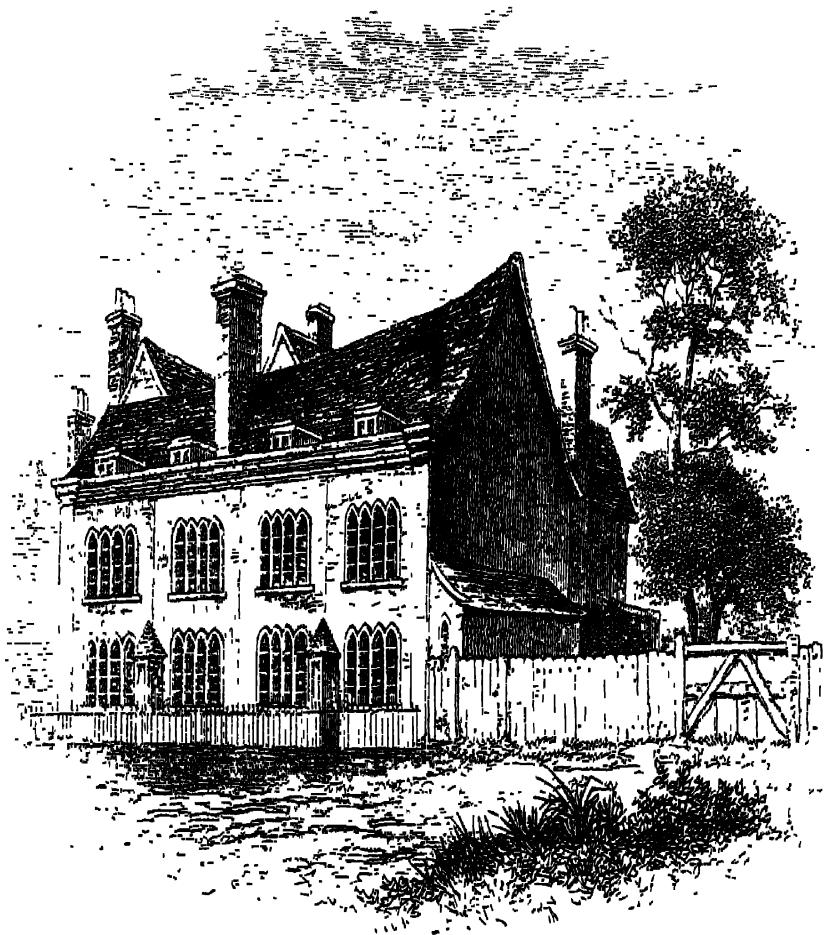
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Shelley did not place his name on the title-page of his pamphlet; its author was "the Hermit of Marlow." † A few days before its appearance he, with his household, had migrated to that pleasant little town by the Thames side, well known to him already by his visits to Peacock. In the river flowing between rich meadows, whose grass and flowers dip to the water, or mirroring cliff and wooded slope, the beech-groves of Bisham, the ozier aits of Cookham, Shelley was to find inexhaustible delight. The town of Great Marlow had an air of old-world peace about it. From the tower of All Saints by the river still rose the wooden spire of the seventeenth century; and the modern suspension bridge had not yet displaced the high-pitched wooden fabric, with its white balustrades, which, spanning the Thames, led to the sylvan solitudes of the Berkshire hills. Shelley's house—Albion House—which had been taken some time since on a lease of twenty-one years,‡ stood in West Street—half a country road—at some distance from the river. It had some feeble pretensions to an ornamental front, with a gabled roof broken by dormer windows, which suggested the once vaguely complimentary term "Gothic;" at least it was spacious, including among its rooms one large enough for a village ball-room, which Shelley fitted up as a library; but it had no view Thamesward, and was damp and cold. To make amends for the lack of view in

\* The title of this pamphlet is prefixed among other titles to Southey's article in the *Quarterly Review*, January, 1817 (published in April), on the "Rise and Progress of Popular Disaffection." The article makes no comment on the pamphlet, the author of which was unknown to Southey.

† Shelley and his household moved to Marlow in the last week of February, some days before the house was ready. He seems to have entered his house in the week March 9-16. During the interval he was for some days in London.

‡ So Peacock. Godwin, in an unpublished letter, says twenty-five years.



COTTAGE OF SHELLEY, GREAT MARLOW, BUCKS.



front was a considerable garden to the rear, including a shady orchard plot, a kitchen garden, evergreen shrubs, and a mound surrounded by cypresses and yews, with a cedar tree among them; still further was the prospect of open meadows, leading towards undulating wooded slopes.\*

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Here Shelley hoped that he had found a lifelong resting-place, or, if not this, that at least it should be his home while Sir Timothy Shelley held the family estates. Here, in his study, were the books in which he took delight, while the youthful Apollo and Venus, in casts of ample size, made the room, as it were, a temple of beauty and radiant force. Here, with her husband, her books, and her blue-eyed boy, Mary was happy; no longer, as last year, for ever haunted by the thought of the certainty of death, and now saddened only by the sense of the flight of time, and the irreparable loss of these serenest hours. And here was Claire, with little Alba, whose baby-face seemed daily to grow more bright in its glad intelligence. Claire, who at Bath had been "Mrs. Clairmont," now resumed her maiden style; and Alba passed for the child of a friend in London, sent into the country for her health.† The Swiss nurse, Elise, attended to the children; a cook was duly instructed in the master's vegetarian rule; and Harry, the manservant, did indoor and outdoor jobs, and kept the garden from running to wildness. Mary studied, sketched, and had the happiness to see the manuscript of "Frankenstein" growing towards completion. Claire also dreamed of authorship and wrote; but her especial delight was in the piano, procured for her by Mary and Shelley, to which she sang in a voice compared by her former music-master, Corri, to "a string of pearls." Shelley, though unskilled in the lore of

\* Albion House, occupied after Shelley left it by a Mrs. Carter, a widow returned with her family from Jamaica, was divided more than forty years ago into three tenements, one of which became a beer-shop.

† "I injured my health by my attentions to Allegra, whom I nursed night and day, the first year of her infancy, as your friend Hunt and also his wife well knew, and used to remonstrate with me" (Miss Clairmont to Byron, 1820).

CHAP. IV. music, received exquisite delight from melody pure and ardent,  
 Jan. 1817- which formed a motive or starting point for his own desires  
 Mar. 1818. and imaginings, and tender or passionate regrets.

“Silver key of the fountain of tears,  
 Where the spirit drinks till the brain is wild;  
 Softest grave of a thousand fears,  
 Where their mother, Care, like a drowsy child,  
 Is laid asleep in flowers.”

Care and fears there were, indeed, which might at any moment wake, for these peaceful days at Marlow were also days of struggle on behalf of what Shelley held to be his highest rights as a father.

New friends, except a few among humble folk unknown to fame, Shelley did not seek or find.\* But of Peacock he saw something; and he rejoiced to be able to invite Godwin and the Hunts, and afterwards Hogg, and Mary's old friend of Dundee, William Baxter, and Horace Smith, to his house at Marlow. “I am not wretch enough,” he said to Peacock, “to tolerate an acquaintance;” but in truth he was not wretch enough to live without true friends. To escape from one alien to his mind or mood, Shelley would resort to comical devices, if he did not choose rather to avoid the calamity by precipitate flight; yet the Marlow house was never for any long period untenanted by one or more of his little band of linked companions. Hunt was to come as soon as possible after they had settled in their new abode. “You shall never be serious when you wish to be merry,” wrote Mary, “and have as many nuts to crack as there are words in the Petitions to Parliament for Reform—a tremendous promise.” And to Godwin, whom he had failed to see in a recent visit to town, Shelley wrote, expecting that the pleasure of a meeting was but for a short time deferred.

\* Among these were the brothers Tyler, men of culture and intelligence, at one time assistants in a draper's shop.

*Shelley to Godwin.*

March 9, 1817.

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Mar. 1818.

MY DEAR GODWIN,

I wish you knew me better than to be vexed or disappointed at anything I do. Either circumstances of petty difficulty and embarrassment find some peculiar attraction in me, or I have a fainter power of repulsion with regard to them. Certain it is that nothing gives me serener and more pure pleasure than your society, and that if in breaking an engagement with you I have forced an exercise of your philosophy upon you, I have in my own person incurred a penalty which mine has not yet taught me to alleviate. . . .

We are immersed in all kind of confusion here. Mary said you meant to come hither soon enough to see the leaves come out. Which leaves did you mean, for the wild-briar buds are already unfolded? And what of "Mandeville," and how will he bear to be transplanted here? All my people, little Willy not excepted, desire their kindest love to you. I beg to unite in kind remembrances to Mrs. Godwin, whose health is I hope improved.

*Shelley to Godwin.*

Marlow, March 22, 1817.

MY DEAR GODWIN,

Marshall's proposal is one in which, however reluctantly, I must refuse to engage.\* It is that I should grant bills to the amount of his debts, which are to expire in thirty months. This is a situation in which it might become me to place myself for the sake of some very dear friend, or some person who might have an irresistible public claim, but which, if it were only in the possible arrival of such emergencies, I feel that with respect to Marshall I am bound to avoid. Do not infer that I deny him to have just claims on my assistance, which, if I were in possession of my paternal estate, I should hasten to fulfil.

It was spring when I wrote to you, and winter when your answer arrived. But the frost is very transitory; every bud is ready to burst into leaf. It is a nice distinction you make between the development and the complete expansion of the leaves. The oak and the chesnut, the latest and the earliest parents of foliage, would afford you a still subtler subdivision, which would enable

\* Godwin's old friend and companion, James Marshall, on whose behalf in 1816 Godwin had drawn up an appeal for assistance to his friends.

CHAP. IV. you to defer the visit from which we expect so much delight for six weeks. I hope we shall really see you before that time, and that  
 Jan. 1817- you will allow the chesnut or any other impartial tree, as he stands  
 Mar. 1818. in the foreground, to be considered as a virtual representation of the rest. Will is quite well and very beautiful. Mary unites with me in presenting her kind remembrances to Mrs. Godwin, and begs her most affectionate love to you.

Have you read "Melincourt"? It would entertain you. Will you be kind enough to pay Newbery, the newsman, for me? I enclose the cheque.

On April 2 Godwin became the guest of his son-in-law at Marlow. In company with Peacock they visited Bisham Wood, and went by water to Medmenham Abbey. But the early April days were dreadfully cold, and Godwin chose to return soon to his familiar quarters in Skinner Street, where all seemed to him rich in such comfort and quiet as a student loves. If only he were free from the weight of debts which still hung upon him! Five hundred pounds owing, in spite of his constant struggle—a struggle sometimes almost "beyond human strength." "Once every three months," he wrote to Shelley, "I throw myself prostrate beneath the feet of Taylor, of Norwich, and my other discounting friends, protesting that this is absolutely for the last time. Shall this ever have an end? Shall I ever be my own man again?"\* While Godwin thus pleaded for help in his distress, Peacock also must be placed above want—an annuity of one hundred pounds was conferred on him by Shelley; the Hunts were never far from pecuniary straits; and Charles Clairmont, away among the Pyrenees, had been charmed by Miss Jeanne Morel, and he and she would be exquisitely happy in being devoted to each other, if only Shelley gave consent. She had the advantage of him in age by about five years, was not ugly, though no one would dare to say she was handsome, and had passed her life among the delicious solitudes near Bagnères; an annual sufficiency to

\* April 15, 1817.

support a little *ménage* would be desirable. "Do I dream, my dear Shelley," he had written, "when a gleam of gay hope gives me reason to doubt of the impossibility of my scheme ?

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. . . I should choose, beyond everything else in the world, the life of Wordsworth ; to cultivate a little *métairie* among the mountains, to become a hardy *campagnard*, and to have a sweet association with every sequestered vale and nook within the compass of my ramblings." A Pyrenean Wordsworth, at Shelley's expense—it was a charming idyl, worthy of an imaginative and ingenuous youth ! Yet it can scarcely be wondered at that there were moments when Shelley resembled, as Godwin declared to him, a blood-horse, starting away in furious mood, and losing a thousand steps ere he drew in. The gad-flies were so many, so incessant, and so keen.

On the evening of his father-in-law's departure arrived the Hunts—Mrs. Hunt ailing, and requiring care and attendance from Mary. Still, notwithstanding interruptions, walks by the river-side, boating excursions, and classical studies, "Frankenstein" drew towards completion. On May 14 the last page was corrected, and the preface was written. Her task at last achieved, Mary decided to place her manuscript in the hands of the great publisher, Murray, and proposed to her father that she should occupy a room in his house while she stayed in town. "It will give me great pleasure," Godwin wrote to Shelley, "to receive Mary on the visit you mention, though I cannot admit that it will do as well as the visit of both together. At my hours of study (which I shall be content a little to abridge) she will have nobody to speak to but Miss Clarke ; and my bedchambers are by no means fit to receive a future ornament of the English baronetage. But such a visit will tend to bring back years that are passed, and to make me young again. It will also operate to render us more familiar and intimate, meeting in this snug and quiet house, for such it appears to me, though I dare say you will lift up your hands, and wonder I can give it that appellation."



CHAP. IV. Under the philosopher of Godwin's constructed character lay  
 Jan. 1817- still some true and sound humanity which peeps forth through  
 Mar. 1818. such words as these.\*

While Shelley stayed for three or four days in town (May 22-26), he accompanied Mary one evening to the Italian Opera, and heard Ambrogetti in "Don Giovanni." Under Hunt's and Peacock's influence he was drawn towards the King's Theatre, and soon became an ardent lover of the music of Mozart. The year 1817 was with Shelley one of rapturous creation, and the fervid mood of creation is sustained and enriched by the rapture of harmony and song. On this or some earlier occasion in the season of 1817, when he was present for the first time at the performance of "Don Giovanni," Peacock sat beside him. "Before it commenced," writes Peacock, "he asked me if the opera was comic or tragic. I said it was composite—more comedy than tragedy. After the killing of the Commendatore, he said, 'Do you call this comedy?' By degrees he became absorbed in the music and action. I asked him what he thought of Ambrogetti [who played the Don]. He said, 'He seems to be the very wretch he personates.' The opera was followed by a ballet, in which Mdlle. Milanie was the principal *danseuse*. He was enchanted with this lady; said he had never imagined such grace of motion; and the impression was permanent, for in a letter he afterwards wrote to me from Milan he said, 'They have no Mdlle. Milanie here.' From this time till he finally left England he was an assiduous frequenter of the Italian Opera. He delighted in the music of Mozart, and especially in the 'Nozze di Figaro,' which was performed several times in the early part of 1818." †

\* Shelley and Mary came to town on May 22, the day "cloudy but pleasant, and the banks of the Thames delightful. Shelley returned to Marlow on the 26th, and Mary on the 31st. Mrs. Hunt appears to have been all this time at Marlow.

† A criticism on "Don Giovanni," as heard by Shelley, will be found in the *Examiner* for 1817, pp. 315, 489; and of Mdlle. Milanie's dancing in the volume of 1818, p. 138.

To beguile a lonely evening, while Shelley was away in CHAP. IV.  
 Marlow, and Godwin supped at Dr. Wolcot's, Mary turned to Jan. 1817-  
 the third canto of "Childe Harold," and found inexpressible Mar. 1818.  
 melancholy in the thoughts which it awakened. Byron, the lake, Mont Blanc—all portions of the dream of the past; and this present time also fleeting away for ever; and death would soon come to end the dream of life. "Do you not remember, Shelley," she wrote in her journal (May 28), "when you first read it to me? One evening after returning from Diodati. It was in our little room at Chapuis. The lake was before us and the mighty Jura. That time is past, and this will also pass, when I may weep to read these words, and again moralize on the flight of time. . . . I think of our excursions on the lake. How we saw him when he came down to us, or welcomed our arrival with a good-humoured smile. How vividly does each verse of his poem recall some scene of this kind to my memory! This time will soon also be a recollection. We may see him again, and again enjoy his society; but the time will also arrive when that which is now an anticipation will be only in the memory. Death will at length come, and in the last moment all will be a dream. Am I not very melancholy? Godwin is out, but I shall finish the canto, although I fear it will not raise my spirits."

Next morning, as she wrote to Shelley, some of the cloud still hung on her, but the sunlight was beginning to pierce and scatter its gloom.

*Mary to Shelley.*

Skinner Street, May 29, 1817.

MY BEST LOVE,

I have not heard from you to-day, nor indeed since you left me, nor did I write last night, for in some way I entirely forgot all about writing until it was too late. We have bad weather now, but it was fine during your voyage, with south-east winds. You are now arrived, and I hope safe under covert, with your pretty Willman, whom kiss a million of times for me. Saturday I shall kiss him myself.

CHAP. IV. Papa is not in very good spirits; the money affairs are at a stand. I wish I could see him happy. He is full of care, and I fear there is no way to relieve this. I suppose you have heard nothing more of the proposal made to Longdill. I have been once to the play, to see Kean in "Barbarossa," Tuesday night, but otherwise I have been at home. Yesterday evening Papa supped with Hazlitt at Dr. Wolcot's, and I amused myself with reading the third canto of "Childe Harold." It made me dreadfully melancholy. The lake, the mountains, and the faces associated with these scenes passed before me. Why is not life a continued moment where hours and days are not counted? But as it is, a succession of events happen; the moment of enjoyment lives only in memory; and when we die, where are we?

"Manfred" is advertised; I long to see it. If the weather is tolerable I shall call in Albemarle Street before I return, and if possible see Murray, and ask a question or two about our faithless Albè; but do not say a word of this,\* as I may learn nothing or worse. Of course Gifford did not allow this courtly bookseller to purchase "Frankenstein." I have no hope on that score, but then I have nothing to fear. I am very well here, but so intolerably restless that it is painful to sit still for five minutes. Pray write. I hear so little from Marlow that I can hardly believe that you and Willman live there. Give my love to such of my guests as care about it—to Clara and *Miss* Alba. Tell Elise I shall buy clothes for Aimée, and that I hope she has been a good girl.† Adieu, dearest. Welcome me with smiles and health.

Your affectionate

PECKSIE.

Send Charles's letter. I will not close this letter just yet, that if I feel in better spirits after dinner I may say so.

Good-bye, pretty one. I smile now, and shall smile again when I see you Saturday.

The hot June of 1817 was favourable to Shelley's health and spirits. He was often on the water in his boat, which was made for both oars and sail, or he would join Hunt, Hunt's wife and sister-in-law, and the children, in their woodland rambles. Thornton Hunt, calling back to mind his appear-

\* *i.e.* to Claire Clairmont.

† *Aimée*, probably Elise's name for Allegra or Alba.

ance at this time, remembered his sunken chest and rounded shoulders, more apparent from an habitual eagerness of mood, which, thrusting forward his face, made him stoop; yet he seemed to abound in vitality, physical as well as intellectual. "In his countenance there was life instead of weariness; melancholy more often yielded to alternations of bright thoughts; and paleness had given way to a certain freshness of colour, with something like roses in the cheeks." Though after violent exercise he panted, and sometimes suffered from acute pain in the side, he could undergo, without injury, long and steady toil. He often walked with Peacock to London, over fields, lanes, woods, and heath, a distance of more than thirty miles; with rope on shoulder he could tow the boat a considerable distance; and though he often chose to steer, he would, if necessary, take an oar, and "could stick to his seat," says Thornton Hunt, "for any time, against any force of current or of wind, not only without complaining, but without being compelled to give in until the set task was accomplished, though it should involve some miles of hard pulling." It was, indeed, a point of honour with Shelley to prove that some grit lay under his outward appearance of weakness and excitable nerves; for he was an apostle of the vegetarian faith, and a water-drinker, and must not discredit the doctrine which he preached and practised. Confessing to Leigh Hunt, at the close of June, that he suffered from the pain in his side, and from such depression of strength and spirits as to make letter-writing an almost intolerable exertion, he adds, "This, you know, with me is transitory. Do not mention that I am unwell to your nephew [Henry Hunt], for the advocate of a new system of diet is held bound to be invulnerable by disease, in the same manner as the sectaries of a new system of religion are held to be more moral than other people, or as a Reformed Parliament must at least be assumed as the remedy of all political evils. No one will change the diet, adopt the religion, or reform the

CHAP. IV. Parliament else."\* It was Shelley's habit to rise early, and Jan. 1817-  
Mar. 1818. to walk or read before breakfast; during the forenoon he studied and wrote; then he would go forth again, book in hand, sometimes with uncovered head under the glowing summer sun, strolling or striding along, sometimes stopping to pluck a flower; or he would row up or down the river to some favourite spot, and there let the boat drift while, as often on Lake Leman, he lay in the bottom gazing upward; or, leaving the boat, he would strike alone into the woodlands, and be invisible for many hours.† He had christened his wandering pinnace "The Vaga;" "bond," added a witty neighbour in letters on the stern. "I have often met him," writes a correspondent of Lady Shelley's, "going or coming from his island retreat near Medmenham Abbey. . . . He was the most interesting figure I ever saw; his eyes like a deer's, bright but rather wild; his white throat unfettered; his slender, but to me almost faultless, shape; his brown long coat with curling lambs' wool collar and cuffs—in fact his whole appearance—are as fresh in my recollection as an occurrence of yesterday. . . . On his return his steps were often hurried, and sometimes he was rather fantastically arrayed; . . . on his head would be a wreath of what in Marlow we call 'old man's beard' and wild flowers intermixed; at these times he seemed quite absorbed, and he dashed along regardless of all he met or passed."‡ At uncanny hours of night he would wander alone in Bisham Wood, to the astonishment of sensible neighbours. Shelley had not lost his love of mirth, and explained that he had been engaged in necromantic efforts to raise the devil, verifying his awful statement by a recital of the opprobrious names used in the evocation.

Shelley's love of solitude and study did not, however,

\* Shelley to Leigh Hunt: Great Marlow, June 29, 1817.

† The above description is that given to Middleton by Mr. Madocks, of Marlow.

‡ Miss Rose to Lady Shelley. The words "like a deer's," which I insert, were used by Miss Rose in conversation.

seclude him from active sympathy with his poorer neighbours. CHAP. IV.  
 The distress consequent upon the cessation of the war, the Jan. 1817-  
 bad harvest of 1816, and the oppressive taxation was keenly Mar. 1818.  
 felt at Marlow. When our purse runs low we first curtail our luxuries, and the Marlow lace-makers could now find no market for their wares. He went, says Peacock, continually among the poor, and to the extent of his ability relieved the most pressing cases of distress. His beneficence was not that of a Lord Bountiful, who bestowed gifts of condescension while remaining on his heights, and regarding the sea of human suffering below; he went from cottage to cottage, and in the winter of 1817 suffered from a severe attack of ophthalmia caught during his brotherly ministrations. Aiding Godwin to the utmost of his power, and bestowing liberal gifts on Peacock, his own resources were at times slender enough; yet each week, whatever happened, he contrived to put by a certain sum for the poor. On Saturday evening came his pensioners for their allowance, widows and children being preferred to other claimants. If Shelley and his wife were absent from Marlow, the bag of coins was left in Mrs. Madocks's hands, to be dispensed at the close of the week by her. "Every spot," writes Mrs. Madocks, "is sacred that he visited; he was a gentleman that seldom took money about with him, and we received numerous little billets, written sometimes on the leaf of a book, to pay the bearer the sum he specified, sometimes as much as half a crown; and one day he came home without shoes, saying that he had no paper, so he gave the poor man his shoes." \* When winter came he felt the shiverings of the poor, and ordered for his friends and neighbours in need a supply of blankets of the kind supplied to the officers of the British army while serving in the Peninsula, with sheets to add cleanliness to warmth; in the centre

\* Mrs. Madocks to Lady Shelley: Marlow, August 16, 1859. Mr. Madocks, in conversation with Middleton, described the wearer of Shelley's shoes as "a poor woman . . . who was limping barefooted over the rough stones."

CHAP. IV. was stamped in large letters the name "Shelley," to prevent their becoming the prey of the pawnbroker. There is not only some wholesome prose in the following document, but perhaps some poetry also, as well deserving of admiration, in its own kind, as any stanza of "The Revolution of the Golden City"—

December 29, 1817.

P. B. SHELLEY, Esq.

			£	s.	d.
20 blankets, at 7s. per blanket ..	..	..	7	0	0
2 pieces sheeting, at 1s. 2d. ..	..	..	9	8	0
Packing, portorage ..	..	..	0	12	9
12 [?] at 2d. ..	..	..	0	2	0
			<hr/>		
Cash by cheque ..	..	..	17	2	9
			<hr/>		
Balance due ..	..	..	15	9	6
			<hr/>		
Balance due ..	..	..	1	13	3 *

The scale of beneficence which began with the philosopher Godwin descended to the humblest cottager in Marlow; but it went far lower. If any Priest or Levite desire to expatiate on the folly of the Samaritan who showed mercy on his neighbour that lay stripped and half-dead, he may know for his behoof that Shelley cherished as his kindred even the humblest living creatures, injuring

"No bright bird, insect, or gentle beast."

In divine folly, like that of St. Francis, he claimed a brotherhood with all beings that could thrill with pain or joy. It was his own lady of the Sensitive Plant who cared tenderly for insects, whose intent, "although they did ill, was innocent"—

"And all killing insects and gnawing worms,  
And things of obscene and unlovely forms,  
She bore in a basket of Indian woof  
Into the rough woods far aloof."

\* From a letter of W. T. Baxter to Shelley, sending his bill, etc., December.

At Marlow the man-servant, Harry, played the part of the Lady of the Garden, when his vegetarian master would purchase cray-fish of the men who brought them through the streets, and would order his servant to bear them back to their lurking-places in the Thames.

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Miss Rose, who tells this singular illustration of Shelley's faith that love should be the law of life, was, as a child, for some time an inmate of Shelley's home at Marlow. One day in early summer the strange gentleman, bareheaded, with eyes like a deer's, and with the pale-green wreaths of wild clematis wound about him, had glanced at her as he came out of the wood; by-and-by he returned with a lady fair and very young, who asked her name, and begged to know if they might see her mother. They had taken a fancy to little brown-eyed Polly, and if her mother could spare her and had no objection, they would like to educate her. Next morning Polly went to their house, where she spent part of almost every day until they left Marlow. Shelley's manner, she says, to all about him was playful and affectionate. At five they dined, Shelley's dinner consisting often of bread and raisins, always eaten off one particular plate. After dinner he would read or write until ten o'clock, at which hour Polly, if sleeping at the house, retired to bed. Before she slept Mrs. Shelley would see her, and talk to her of what she and her husband had been reading or discussing, always winding up with, "And now, Polly, what do you think of this?" On Christmas Eve Shelley related the ghostly tale of Bürger's ballad of Leonore, a copy of which in Spencer's translation, with Lady Diana Beauclerc's designs, he possessed, working up the horror to such a height of fearful interest that Polly "quite expected to see Wilhelm walk into the drawing-room." A favourite game with Shelley was to put Polly on a table and tilt it up, letting the little girl slide its full length; or she and Miss Clairmont would sit together on the table, while Shelley ran it from one end of the room to the other. On the day on



CHAP. IV. which he left Marlow for ever, Shelley filled his favourite plate with raisins and almonds and gave it to Polly—a relic Jan. 1817–  
Mar. 1818. which she treasured for almost half a century, when by her desire it was placed among the objects belonging to his father, which remain in the possession of Shelley's son.\*

During the summer and autumn of 1817 Shelley read less, perhaps, than in some earlier years, for his days were spent rather in creating than acquiring; yet he read much, and with his characteristic intensity and swiftness. "Remember me to all whom I know at Marlow," Hogg had written to him in May, "and accept my good wishes for yourself and them, that the gods may so far shake off their Epicurean laziness as to impel you all to the reading of as much Greek as external circumstances and the incessant shower of colliding atoms will allow." When, after his visit to Marlow, that friendly cynic returned to London on the last day of July, "talking of ducks and women," as Mary describes him, he must have been aware that his petition to the gods had been granted. "Shelley's readings this year," says Mrs. Shelley, "were chiefly Greek." Beside the Hymns of Homer, a translation of which he hoped to accomplish, and the "Iliad," he studied in Greek the dramas of Æschylus and Sophocles, the "Banquet" of Plato, and Arrian's "Indica;" in Latin, Apuleius and Ovid's "Metamorphoses." Among English writers he still found in Godwin his chief philosophic master, in Gibbon his instructor in history. For poetry, prose fiction, and literary criticism, he turned to Scott, Moore, Coleridge, among his contemporaries; and now and again browsed among the Elizabethans—Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, the dramatists represented in Lamb's "Specimens," and Spenser's "Faerie Queene." A great portion of the Bible was read aloud in the evenings. Among the Hebrew sacred writings he found a peculiar attrac-

\* Miss Rose was much with Elise and the children. "William," she writes, "was very beautiful, and very like his Mamma. Missy [Clara] I thought the counterpart of her Papa."

tion in the majesty and mystery of the Book of Job. "The writings attributed to Solomon," says Leigh Hunt, "he thought too Epicurean, in the modern sense of the word ;\* and in his notions of St. Paul, he agreed with the writer of the work, 'Not Paul but Jesus.'" It needed but the removal of some casual hindrances, and Shelley would have discovered the ardent and heroic humanity of the heart which lived beneath St. Paul's contorted logic and elaborate theological constructions.

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But the months at Marlow were chiefly memorable for eager and aspiring song. It was in his first resentment against Lord Eldon on his passing the decree, says Mrs. Shelley, that the father, cruelly robbed, as he conceived, of his offspring, uttered his curse on tyranny and fraud, as incarnated in the person of the Chancellor, in stanzas tremulous with indignation, love, and anguish—

"I curse thee by a parent's outraged love ;  
By hopes long cherished and too lately lost ;  
By gentle feelings thou couldst never prove ;  
By griefs which thy stern nature never crossed ;

"By those infantine smiles of happy light  
Which were a fire within a stranger's hearth,  
Quenched even when kindled, in untimely night  
Hiding the promise of a lovely birth.

"By all the happy see in children's growth,  
That undeveloped flower of budding years ;  
Sweetness and sadness interwoven both,  
Source of the sweetest hopes and saddest fears.

"I curse thee, though I hate thee not. O slave !  
If thou couldst quench the earth-consuming hell  
Of which thou art a dæmon, on thy grave  
This curse should be a blessing. Fare thee well !"

\* In the "Essay on Christianity," Shelley speaks of "the sublime dramatic poem entitled 'Job'" as having familiarized the imagination of Jesus with the boldest imagery afforded by the human mind and the material world. "*Eccelestastes* had diffused a seriousness and solemnity over the frame of his spirit, and made audible to his listening heart 'the still sad music of humanity.'"

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"No words," says Mrs. Shelley, "can express the anguish he felt when his elder children were torn from him." And Leigh Hunt's testimony is to the same effect. After the Chancellor's adverse decision Shelley "never dared to trust himself," says Hunt, "with mentioning their names in my hearing, though I had stood at his side throughout the business." While the question was still pending, some words of the Chancellor led Shelley to imagine that he might even be deprived of his little William. "He did not hesitate to resolve," writes Mrs. Shelley, "if such were menaced, to abandon country, fortune, everything, and to escape with his child." Mary looked forward to the birth of a babe in the autumn, and it was probably before the baby Clara, born on September 2, was in her arms, that Shelley addressed the stanzas to his boy, in which he imagines him safe, with father and mother and a sweet new playmate, in some free land beyond the waves.

" We soon shall dwell by the azure sea  
Of serene and golden Italy.  
Or Greece, the mother of the free.  
And I will teach thine infant tongue  
To call upon those heroes old  
In their own language, and will mould  
Thy growing spirit in the flame  
Of Grecian lore; that by such name  
A patriot's birthright thou may'st claim."

But the birthright claimed by Shelley's beloved child was only a handful of Italian earth amid the majesty of Rome. "I envy death the body," Shelley afterwards wrote, "far less than the oppressors the minds of those whom they have torn from me." \*

Poetical designs of wide scope and lofty purpose occupied Shelley's imagination as he floated in his boat under the

\* I date the poem "To William Shelley" before September 2, because such a date falls in with the words used by Mrs. Shelley in her note on the poems written in 1817, and because the reference to William's future playmate, whose sex is not named, seems to me proper to an unborn infant.

beech-groves of Bisham, or, pencil in hand and manuscript book on knee, sat on a prominence among the woods which looked towards the tranquil river. For a time, perhaps, he wavered between the attractions of a theme chosen from the history of the individual soul and one which should present an epoch in the life of humanity, and include, under imaginative forms, something like an ideal philosophy of history. In the individual life the supreme event is the quest for love and for one who shall be love's avatar on earth; and the supreme tragedy in the life of the individual soul is to accept a false or earthly love in place of what is highest, divinest, and most human. For there are two goddesses Aphrodite, as Pausanias maintained in Plato's "Banquet," and two Loves, a heavenly and an earthly; and that a seeker for the highest beauty and the highest love should err or be deceived, and fix his affections on the lower—this is the most piteous of all failures in life. Such a tragedy of the individual soul Shelley designed to exhibit in his poem of "Prince Athanase." A youth high-born and high-hearted, instructed in all wise ancient lore, who with his aged instructor Zonoras has unsphered the spirit of Plato, has yet won from all his aspiring thoughts and dreams not joy but a profound and nameless melancholy. It is the sadness of one who, like the youth in "Alastor," has beheld in dream a veiled maid, the avatar of perfect love and beauty, and who must needs seek throughout the world her who alone gives meaning and harmony to the fret and turmoil of human life. Shelley feared that he might carry the analysis of a character so refined as that of Athanase to a point at which its subtleties might become morbid in their remoteness from the common play of healthy human passion and action; and he forbore to complete the study. Less happy than the hero of "Alastor," who seeks Love in vain, but never falls from his ideal height upon a lower level of feeling, and dies before his quest attains its object, Prince Athanase is lured away by earthly lights from his pursuit of those primal springs of light

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CHAP. IV. which are heavenly. Or so it would have been had Shelley completed his noble fragment. Yet, happier than the dreamer of the "Alastor," Prince Athanase was at last to behold her whom, through all errors, he desired—to behold her once before his eyes closed in death. "In the first sketch of the poem," says Mrs. Shelley, "he named it 'Pandemos and Urania.' Athanase seeks through the world the one whom he may love. He meets, in the ship in which he has embarked, a lady who appears to him to embody his ideal of love and beauty. But she proves to be Pandemos, or the earthly and unworthy Venus, who, after disappointing his cherished dreams and hopes, deserts him. Athanase, crushed by sorrow, pines and dies. On his death-bed, the lady who can really reply to his soul comes and kisses his lips." The poem, accordingly, stands in conception midway between "Alastor" and "Epipsychidion," and as in this latter piece there may be found something like a veiled record of the history of Shelley's heart, so, doubtless, it would have been with "Prince Athanase." He, too, had cherished one whom in the Lynmouth days he had taken for his Uranian love; and she had, as he conceived, mocked his hopes and deserted him. And now, when pain haunted him, and life seemed insecure and death never far away, another had come, to whom afterwards he addressed the lines beginning—

"O Mary dear, that you were here!  
With your brown eyes bright and clear;"

and whom, in "Prince Athanase," he idealizes as the Uranian lady who comes and touches with her lips the dying youth.

"Her sphered eyes were brown,  
And in their dark and liquid moisture swam  
Like the dim orb of the eclipsed moon;  
Yet when the spirit flashed beneath, there came  
The light from them as when tears of delight  
Double the western planet's serene flame."

We cannot fix the precise date of the fragments of "Prince CHAP. IV. Athanase." One portion was dated by Mrs. Shelley in the Jan. 1817- "Posthumous Poems" December, 1817; to the entire group of Mar. 1818. fragments she appended the date "Marlow, 1817." It may be that, having completed the great work of the year, "Laon and Cythna," Shelley started on this new poetical enterprise, and, with enfeebled health and the prospect of a journey to Italy found it impossible to devote himself to the accomplishment of his admirable and ambitious project.

A second Marlow fragment, but one which was afterwards carried to completion, is the English portion of "Rosalind and Helen." It can hardly be doubted that while the general frame and setting of the poem is of Italian origin, much of the story of Helen, and part, perhaps, of that of Rosalind, was written under the impulses of feeling which produced the greater poem of "Laon and Cythna." In September the physicians enjoined Shelley to cease from the exciting toil of composition, and to seek the benefits of rest and change of air. "It is well," wrote Mary to him on the 26th of that month, "that your poem was finished before this edict was issued against the imagination; but my pretty eclogue will suffer from it." Mary's "pretty eclogue" was the poem afterwards published as "Rosalind and Helen." We might imagine that it originally commenced at the opening of Helen's tale, which describes the gloom and lethargy following too quickly on the dawn of hopes like those which kindled the great morning of the French Revolution.

"Alas, all hope is buried now!  
 But then men dreamed the aged earth  
 Was labouring in that mighty birth  
 Which many a poet and a sage  
 Had aye foreseen—the happy age  
 When truth and love shall dwell below  
 Among the works and ways of men."

The tale of Lionel is that of a Laon whose world lies less

CHAP. IV. remote from the actual world in which Shelley lived and moved, than does the Golden City of his ideal romance. Helen's lover, like Cythna's, wars against a society founded on injustice and hypocrisy, and, like Laon, perishes, but by a milder martyrdom. The love which Athanase sought through grief and error, Lionel has found; and now he would make that love prevail in the world and become its law; the world, still thwart and untoward, foils his purpose, and he dies, yet dies in the temple of Fidelity, leaving behind him a son, whose lips and brows are like his own—a son who may bring nearer those golden days seen by his father as in a vision. Shelley's ardour on behalf of the poem "Rosalind and Helen" paled and grew faint, probably because its theme was handled in more heroic fashion in his ideal epic of revolution, "Laon and Cythna." The tale of Rosalind, which forms a counterpart, perhaps later in date, to that of Helen, is of the blight which comes upon a woman's life through the bond of loveless wedlock. It had been maintained in the course of the Chancery suit that Shelley's notions respecting marriage led to conduct which the law of England termed immoral. Well, here was an example of the deadlier immorality created by English law. Rosalind, who lost her first love in a sudden shock and horror, has since ordered her conduct according to the conventions of society, with the result that her inward being suffers disruption and all but moral ruin. Hideous experience! she has known the ghastliness of an involuntary joy when the earth fell rattling on her husband's coffin. Yet of her former companion Helen, Rosalind, in her pride of material virtue, has thought as though *she* were the frail and fallen one. Now at length, in a strange land, sorrow reunites the pair. It can hardly be doubted that the incidents and feelings portrayed were to some extent suggested to Shelley by Mary's relations with the friend of her girlhood, in the old Dundee days—Isabel Baxter. Since Mary's flight from her father's house in July, 1814,

Isabel had fallen away from friendship. Now she was herself CHAP. IV.  
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Mar. 1818. a wife, and rumours, probably false rumours, reached Mary that Isabel was not a happy wife. A visit of Isabel's father, William Baxter, to Marlow, in September, tended to draw the alienated friends once more together; and when it was proposed that Isabel Booth should be Mary's companion on the journey to Italy, she would gladly have acceded to the proposal. But David Booth, her husband, no ordinary man, had heard scandalous and lying tales of Shelley's life; his strong moral sense was shocked by the thought of danger to his wife's character or fame, and sternly yet tenderly he forbade a renewal of the intimacy. So by the Lake of Como there was no meeting, like that represented in the poem, of the sundered friends.

In her letter of September 26, Mary speaks of Shelley's poem (the name "Laon and Cythna" had not yet been given to it) as finished; it was, in fact, finished three or four days before that date.\* The poem had been the work of little more than six months, devoted to his task, as Shelley says, "with unremitting ardour and enthusiasm." We note in Mary's journal for mid and later April the entries—"Shelley reads Spenser aloud," "Shelley reads Spenser in the evening," "Shelley reads 'History of the French Revolution,'" "Shelley reads 'History of the French Revolution' and Spenser aloud in the evening." These entries take us back a little more than six months from the date at which "Laon and Cythna" is said by Mary to have been complete. "Laon and Cythna," written in the Spenserian stanza, is an epic of Revolution and Counter-revolution. We cannot doubt that in April, when beginning his poem, Shelley, as he read Spenser aloud, was accustoming his ear to the measure which he had chosen, while in the "History of the French Revolution" he obtained materials for his narrative, studying the life of a people

\* Mary writes in her journal, "September 29, Shelley finishes his poem and goes up to town with Clara, Tuesday, 23rd."



CHAP. IV. during such a crisis in its history as that which he was about to exhibit in an idealized outline. Behind both form and material, behind Spenser and his study of the facts of the great upheaval in France, lay certain abstractions—Shelley's guiding principles in ethics and politics. These he had acquired from Godwin; and among the books read in 1817 was one which indeed was never absent for any long period from his hands—"Political Justice."

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"Shelley told me," says Medwin, "that he and Keats had mutually agreed, in the same given time (six months each) to write a long poem, and that the 'Endymion' and 'Revolt of Islam' were the fruits of this rivalry." There is no improbability in some such resolve having been uttered by the two young poets, each having a brain which teemed with ideas and imagery. We know that on February 4, 1818, Shelley, Keats, and Hunt, in generous rivalry, wrote each a sonnet on a common theme, the river Nile.\* But assuredly the spirit of emulation was not that which sustained either Keats or Shelley in their wide-orbed poetic flights of the preceding year. All of Keats's native enthusiasm for beauty in its quint-essential forms poured itself into his "Endymion." It was the firstfruits of that vow or prayer which he had uttered—

"O for ten years, that I may overwhelm  
Myself in poesy; so I may do the deed  
That my own soul has to itself decreed!"

Hanging over his own joy more broodingly than did Shelley, Keats lived longer with his cherished imaginings; it was mid-

\* Mr. John Dix, in his "Pen and Ink Sketches of Poets, Preachers, and Politicians" (1846), p. 144, states that Shelley interested himself in the publication of Keats's first volume. "He went," says Mr. Dix, "to Charles Richards, the printer in St. Martin's Lane, when quite young, about the printing a little volume of Keats's first poems. (I have a copy given me by Richards.) The printer told me that he had never had so strange a visitor. He was gaunt, and had peculiar starts and gestures, and a way of fixing his eyes and his whole attitude for a good while, like the abstracted apathy of a musing madman." But Keats wrote to Shelley in August, 1820, "I remember you advising me not to publish my first blights on Hampstead Heath."

winter or the edge of spring before his delighted task was at an end. Other motives than those which were purely poetical urged on Shelley; he had a prophetic message to deliver, and he feared that death might come swiftly and put its dust upon his lips. Deeply moved by the misery of England in 1817, the slumbry agitation, the feverish hopes and fears of the people, the prevailing distress, the triumph of reaction in home and foreign politics, the suspension of the Habeas Corpus, the trials for treason, the trials for blasphemous libel, the buttressing of the Bourbon dynasty in France by foreign bayonets, the panic of vindictive loyalty, Shelley could not at this moment sequester himself, as did Keats, from the public interests of his time. When he mused alone in his boat under the woods of Bisham, or on some islet of the Thames with the swan for sole companion, it was in the spirit of a prophet who has withdrawn into the desert to see more clearly, as from a distance, the present or the future life of his people and of mankind. Shelley saw, or thought he saw, as the great fact of his age that vast movement towards a reconstruction of society in which the French revolution had been a startling incident—an incident fruitful of much evil and much good. He saw the terror, the despair, the apathy, the recoil, consequent on the violence and excesses in France; and seeing these, and gazing into the past and the future, he did not despair—he hoped. It was his desire to rekindle in men the aspiration towards a happier condition of moral and political society, and at the same time to warn men of the dangers which arise in a movement of revolution from their own egoisms and greeds and grosser passions; it was his desire, therefore, to present the true ideal of revolution—a national movement based on moral principle, inspired by a passion of justice and a passion of charity, unstained by blood, unclouded by turbulence, and using material force only as the tranquil putting forth in act of spiritual powers.

Even now, through the apathy and cynicism of these ill

CHAP. IV.

Jan. 1817-  
Mar. 1818.

CHAP. IV. days of the Regency, Shelley perceived that the wiser work  
 Jan. 1817- of the democratic movement—the work of reconstruction—had  
 Mar. 1818. begun. The darkness was ebbing, and the eastern horizon was touched with a thin pale line of light. “There is a reflux in the tide of human things,” he wrote, in the preface to his poem, “which bears the shipwrecked hopes of men into a secure haven after the storms are past. Methinks, those who now live have survived an age of despair.” Not that Shelley, however he might behold things in the visions of his prophetic hour, when the singing robes were on, really expected a sudden amendment of society. Laon and Cythna perish amid the flames; yet not until their words have been scattered among mankind to quicken a new birth. The French Revolution, ushered in so radiantly by the bright enthusiasms of 1789, had darkened to a sunset of blood, and Shelley had now no deceiving expectation that men can be transformed from what they are in a few days or years. “Could *they* listen,” he asks, “to the plea of reason who had groaned under the calamities of a social state according to the provisions of which one man riots in luxury whilst another famishes for want of bread? Can he who the day before was a trampled slave suddenly become liberal-minded, forbearing, and independent? This is the consequence of the habits of a state of society to be produced by resolute perseverance and indefatigable hope, and long-suffering and long-believing courage, and the systematic efforts of generations of men of intellect and virtue.” Least of all did Shelley believe in hastening the arrival of the golden year by violent combinations of selfish men. It is love which is to lead mankind forward, and therefore in his poem he enhances the part which woman is to play in the future reconstruction of society. Cythna and Laon are equal and united powers, each heart answering the other in their pursuit of strenuous deeds, and together they enter the Temple of the Spirit. As in Goethe’s “Himmelfahrt,” the words of a *chorus mysticus* are the last words we hear:—





To  
~~My Mother~~ ~~My Mother~~ ~~My Mother~~  
 To Mary —, —.

1  
 So now my summer task is ended Mary,  
 And I return to Thee, mine own hearts home;  
 As to his Queen some victor Knight of Fairy,  
 Earning bright spoils for her enchanted dome,  
 Nor then disdain, that ere my fame become  
 A star among the stars of mortal night  
 If it indeed may clear its natal gloom  
 Its doubtful promise thou I would write  
 With thy beloved name, thou Child of Love & Light.

The toil which stirs from the so many an  
 Is ended, - and the fruit is at thy <sup>hour</sup> feet!  
 No longer when the woods to frame a bow  
 With interlaid branches mix & meet,  
 Or when with sound like many voices great  
 Waterfalls leap among with islands green  
 Which frame for my lone boat a home <sup>where</sup>  
 Of moss-grown trees & weeds, shall I be seen:  
 But beside thee, where still my heart  
 has ever been.

3

Thoughts of great deeds were mine, dear Friend  
 The clouds which wrap the world from <sup>when first</sup> you  
 did pass.

And, in the sweetest <sup>42</sup>smile, & in the tears,  
And in the gentle speech, a prophecy  
Is whispered, to subdue my proudest fears:  
And thro' those eyes, seen in thy soul, I see  
A lamp of vital fire burning internally.

12

They say that thou wert lovely from thy birth  
Of glorious parents thou aspiring Child.  
I wonder not - for one thou left this Earth  
Whose life was like a setting planet true  
Which clothed thee in the radiance undimmed  
Of its departing glory; still her flame  
Shines on thee, thro' the tempest's dark &  
Which shake these latter days, & thou canst <sup>with</sup> claim



The shelter, from thy <sup>43</sup> ~~sin~~, of an immortal name.

13.

A voice went forth from that unbroken Spirit  
Which was the echo of three thousand years;  
And the tumultuous world stood mute to hear it,  
As some lone man who in a desert hears  
The music of his home:—unworked fears  
Fell on the pale oppressors of our race,  
And Faith, & Custom, & low thoughted cares,  
Like thunder-stricken dragons, for a space  
Left ~~the~~ torn human heart, their for & dwelling  
place.

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\* The Author of "An Enquiry concerning Political Justice"

For this deathless voice pauses among mortals!

If there must be no <sup>response</sup> ~~answer~~ to my cry —

If men must rise & stamp with fury blind

For his pure name who loves them; — Thou & I

Street Friend! can look from our tranquillity

Like lamps into the world's tempestuous night,

Two tranquil stars, while clouds are heaving

Which wrap them from the founding <sup>by</sup> ~~beams~~ <sup>light</sup> ~~beams~~,  
~~That~~ burn from year to year with unex- <sup>sigh</sup> ~~ting~~ <sup>ing</sup> ~~light~~ <sup>light</sup>.

~~The~~ ~~colourless~~ ~~9~~ ~~shapeless~~ ~~most~~ ~~that~~ ~~hovers~~  
~~Over the length of dawn — a vale outspread~~  
~~Beneath the gathering rainbow — green <sup>coron</sup> that~~



“Das Ewig-Weibliche  
Zieht uns hinan.”

CHAP. IV.

Jan. 1817–  
Mar. 1818.

With propriety, therefore, the poem, which contains in *Cythna* an idealized image of such a type of womanhood as in real life was presented by Mary Wollstonecraft, was dedicated to Mary Wollstonecraft's daughter :—

“The toil which stole from thee so many an hour  
Is ended—and the fruit is at thy feet.  
No longer where the woods to frame a bower  
With interlaced branches mix and meet,  
Or where, with sound like many voices sweet,  
Waterfalls leap among wild islands green  
Which framed for my lone boat a lone retreat  
Of moss-grown trees and weeds, shall I be seen :  
But beside thee, where still my heart has ever been.”

For the present time, all Shelley dared to believe was that a new and beneficial movement of society had begun ; and he had faith that it must proceed. Such a faith sufficed to lift and bear away the cloud of gloom and misanthropy which had been settling down on life and literature since the failure of the high hopes of France. “Our works of poetry and fiction,” Shelley wrote, “have been overshadowed by the same infectious gloom. But mankind appear to me to be emerging from their trance. I am aware, methinks, of a slow, gradual, and silent change. In that belief I have composed the following poem.” Unhappily, with all that was admirable in the Revolution—its enthusiasm of humanity, its ideal of justice, its recognition of a moral element in politics, its sentiment of the brotherhood of man—there are united in Shelley's poem all its shallow sophisms,—its disregard of tradition and inheritance, its total misconception of history, its grotesque notion that governments and religions have been the artificial manufacture of knaves, its intoxication with abstract ideas, its false contrast of a benevolent Nature with society regarded as selfish, its too-liberal faith in the innate virtue of all men—

CHAP. IV. save only of kings and priests. The history of the Christian  
 Jan. 1817- centuries was for Shelley the history of a giant imposture,  
 Mar. 1818. however much he might venerate the character of the founder  
 of Christianity. In ancient Greece he recognized "the mother  
 of the free;" forgetful of the fact that the Greek republics  
 were a congeries of slave states, in which the taste and in-  
 tellect of a close aristocracy were sustained by the toil and  
 anguish of its myriad victims. Shelley's illusions are such as  
 now could deceive no thinking mind; his generous ardours,  
 the quivering music of his verse, the quick and flame-like  
 beauty of his imagery, bear still their living gifts to the spirits  
 of men.

Shelley's position in 1817, under condemnation of the  
 Lord Chancellor of Great Britain as immoral in his principles  
 and his conduct, was not without influence on the evolution of  
 his poetical romance. He had at one time anticipated the  
 possibility of standing in the streets of London in the pillory  
 as an atheist and a republican. In the hero and heroine of  
 his poem he will show how atheists and republicans can live  
 and die—filled with passionate love for man, gentle, high of  
 soul, and fearless. The Chancellor had deprived him of the  
 care of his children, in part at least, because he held opinions  
 with respect to the marriage-tie which were opposed to the  
 doctrines of English law. He will show in his poem that there  
 is no natural and immutable law regulating the relation of the  
 sexes except the law of mutual love and service. What so  
 monstrous, according to our customary notions of morality, as  
 that brother and sister should enter into a closer union and  
 become the parents of a child? Yet, abstractedly considered—  
 so Shelley reasoned—what is there in the law of nature to  
 forbid such an union? Why should an accident of birth  
 prevail against the imperious dictate of the heart? And were  
 it not a good service to startle men from the trance of custom  
 by compelling them to consider the difference between the  
 temporary and the eternal moral laws? Therefore Cythna

shall be the sister of Laon. The abstract method of consider-  
 ing moral problems, acquired by Shelley from the study of  
 "Political Justice," led him to a conclusion and a state of  
 feeling so strange, abnormal, and repulsive. Reasoning about  
 naked manhood in an imaginary state of nature, he did not  
 perceive that such an abstraction as naked manhood has no  
 real existence. We are parts—each of us—of a social organ-  
 ism, product of the evolution of countless ages. Shelley's  
 poem furnishes a flagrant illustration of the unsoundness of  
 that revolutionary way of thinking which, with the solvent of  
 abstract notions, erroneously deduced, proceeds to disintegrate  
 social relations and sentiments which have grown out of the  
 life of humanity.

During the summer and autumn days the house at Marlow  
 was a hive of workers. "Frankenstein" being now in the  
 hands of the publishers, Mary occupied herself in August and  
 October, before and not long after the birth of her little girl  
 (September 2), in transcribing, with emendations and additions,  
 the journal of her tour with Shelley to the Continent in 1814,  
 together with the letters from Geneva of 1816.\* The "Six  
 Weeks' Tour," accepted by Hookham, was published by him in  
 December. Claire, too, had written a book, of what description  
 we know not; but Shelley's efforts to procure a publisher for it  
 proved unsuccessful. In her journal Mary notes, on November 3,  
 that she has been engaged in writing from Shelley's dictation  
 "the translation of Spinoza"—a translation, doubtless, of a part  
 of the "Tractatus Theologico-politicus," of which a fragment  
 in Shelley's handwriting was afterwards obtained from Mr.  
 Madocks, of Marlow, by Middleton, and was printed by him  
 as an original composition of the poet's, belonging, as he con-  
 jectured, to the period of "Zastrozzi" and "St. Irvyne." This

\* Mr. Furnivall, a surgeon of Egham, attended Mrs. Shelley at Clara's birth. Shelley would often "come and sit on the surgery counter to have a chat with Mr. Furnivall, and refuse to refresh himself with anything but a dish of milk and a piece of bread." Dr. F. J. Furnivall states that Shelley in his father's hearing once spoke of Harriet as "a frantic idiot."

CHAP. IV. treatise of Spinoza had a peculiar attraction for Shelley. From Tanyrallt, in 1813, he had written to Hookham, begging the bookseller to send him a copy of the "Tractatus." At Marlow he was engaged on the translation, which was taken up again in March and April, 1820, at Pisa. Not many months before his death (November, 1821) Shelley proposed to his friend Edward Williams to assist him in rendering the work into English. Byron would put his name upon the title-page, and would furnish as preface a life of the Jewish philosopher. Shelley and Williams achieved a portion of their task; but the strange introduction—a life of the tranquil geometer of the Infinite by the passionate child of the romantic movement—was probably never begun. Spinoza's treatise, we can believe, interested Shelley chiefly because it helped to distinguish what is of abiding and universal importance in the Bible—a book precious to Shelley—from what is temporary and accidental.

Three letters of Shelley, written to publishers in August, show that the visions of the Golden City did not remove him from the actual world, and the details of practical affairs. The first was addressed to Ollier, and refers to the work of "a friend"—probably to "Frankenstein," the authorship of which Mary for the present desired to conceal. The second inquires after his own "Alastor." In the third he offers a novel, in all probability "Frankenstein," which both Murray and Ollier had declined, to Messrs. Lackington, Allen, and Co.\*

*Shelley to Ollier.*

Marlow, August 3, 1818 [for 1817].

DEAR SIR,

I send you with this letter a manuscript, which has been consigned to my care by a friend in whom I feel considerable interest. I do not know how far it consists with your plan of

\* Mary, summing up in her journal the events which happened between Clara's birth, September 2 and September 19, notes, "Bargain with Lackington concerning 'Frankenstein.'"

business to purchase the copyrights, or a certain interest in the copyrights, of any works which should appear to promise success. I should certainly prefer that some such arrangement as this should be made, if on consideration you could make any offer which I should feel justified to my friend in accepting. How far that can be you will be better able to judge after a perusal of the MSS. Perhaps you will do me the favour of communicating your decision to me as early as you conveniently can.

I remain, dear sir,

Your faithful, obedient servant,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

Do you know is Taylor's Pausanias to be purchased, and at what price?

Be so kind as to tell me also is Martyn's "Georgics" of Virgil printed in a very large octavo edition, to match the "Eclogues"? I wish an octavo edition of Moore's new poem ["Lalla Rookh"] to be half-bound for me. I enclose a note to Mr. Hunt, which you will have the kindness to put in the post for me.

*Shelley to Ollier.\**

Marlow, August 8, 1817.

DEAR SIR,

I wish you to send me, together with "Lalla Rookh," if it will be ready in a few days, a copy of Dr. Percy's "Northern Antiquities." If the former is not at present ready, I wish the latter to come immediately.

May I trouble you with a commission, and is it in your range of transaction, to undertake it? I published some time since a poem called "Alastor," at Baldwin's: the sale, I believe, was scarcely anything, but as the printer has sent me in his account, I wish to know also how my account stands with the publisher. He had no interest in the work, nor do I know any one else had. It is scarcely worth while to [do] anything more with it than to procure a business-like reply on the subject of the state of what is to pay or receive. In case this commission is unusual or disagreeable to you for any reason of which I may be ignorant, I beg that you will not scruple to decline it.

\* The original is in the possession of Mr. Frederickson, of New York, who has kindly favoured me with a copy. It was sold at the Ollier sale of autographs, 1877.



CHAP. IV. I hope "Frankenstein" did not give you bad dreams, and  
 remain, dear sir,  
 Jan. 1817-  
 Mar. 1818.

Your very obedient servant,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

Can you lend me the sixth volume of Gibbon's "Rome"?

*Shelley to Messrs. Lackington, Allen, and Co.*

GENTLEMEN,

I ought to have mentioned that the novel which I sent you is not my own production, but that of a friend, who, not being at present in England, cannot make the correction you suggest. As to any mere inaccuracies of language, I should feel myself authorized to amend them when revising the proofs. With respect to the terms of publication, my first wish certainly was to receive on my friend's behalf an adequate price for the copyright of the MSS. As it is, however, I beg to submit the following proposal, which I hope you will think fair, particularly as I understand it is an arrangement frequently made by the booksellers with authors who are new to the world. It is that you should take the risk of printing and advertising, etc., entirely on yourselves, and, after full deduction being made from the profits of the book to cover these expenses, that the clear produce, both of the first edition and of every succeeding edition, should be divided between you and the author. I cannot in the author's part disclaim all interest in the first edition, because it is possible that there may be no demand for another, and then the profits, however small, will be all that will accrue.

I hope on consideration that you will not think such an arrangement as this unreasonable, or one to which you will refuse your assent.

Gentlemen, I am

Your very obedient servant,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

Great Marlow, Bucks, August 22, 1817.

The excitement and prolonged strain of poetical creation, hardly felt during the summer days, told injuriously on Shelley's health as the vivifying heat withdrew, and the autumn chills began to touch the flowers and the woodlands. "Shelley writes his poem; his health declines," Mary notes

in her journal, when briefly chronicling the events between CHAP. IV.  
Jan. 1817-  
Mar. 1818. September 2, the date of Clara's birth, and September 19. "Much of what the volume [of 'Laon and Cythna'] contains," Shelley wrote to Godwin, "was written with the same feeling, as real, though not so prophetic, as the communications of a dying man." On September 23, accompanied by Claire, he went to town, taking with him his poem, now happily complete, to consult Mr. William Lawrence, a distinguished pupil of Abernethy, whose published Lectures two years later, assailed in pamphlets and pulpit discourses as materialistic, became the occasion of a struggle between the orthodox and heterodox camps, resulting in his rejection and re-election by the governors of Bethlehem Hospital. The Hunts, visitors at Marlow during part of September, followed Shelley to London two days later, and received him at their new residence, 13, Lisson Grove North, Paddington. Shelley's absence from home was cheered by frequent letters from his wife.

*Mary to Shelley.*

September 25, 1817.

You tell me, dearest, to write you long letters, but I do not know whether I can to-day, as I am very tired. My spirits, however, are much better than they were, and perhaps your absence is the cause. Ah! my love, you cannot guess how wretched it was to see your languor and increasing illness. I now say to myself, perhaps he is better; but then I watched you every moment, and every moment was full of pain both to you and to me. Write, my love, a long account of what Lawrence says; I shall be very anxious until I hear.

I do not see a great deal of our guests; they rise late, and walk all the morning. This is something like a contrary fit of Hunt's, for I meant to walk to-day, and said so; but they left me, and I hardly wish to take my first walk [*i.e.* after Clara's birth] by myself; however, I must to-morrow if he shows the same want of *tact*. Peacock dines here every day, *uninvited*, to drink his bottle. I have not seen him; he morally disgusts me; and Marianne [Mrs. Hunt] says that he is very ill-tempered. . . .

CHAP. IV. Pray, dearest, come back in better health, looking cheerful, and  
 Jan. 1817- pleased with me and your two pretty babes. Alba is quite well.  
 Mar. 1818. Tell me what money you took, and if you took £1 from my table.

A letter came from Godwin to-day; very short. You will see him; tell me how he is. You are loaded with business; the event of most of which I am anxious to learn, and none so much as whether you can do anything for my father. . . .

Adieu, my own one. Come back as quickly as you may, with bright eyes and stout limbs.

Your own affectionate

MARY.

The physician's opinion, that rest and change of air were needful to restore Shelley's health, was communicated without delay to Mary, and to her was left the decision whether they should move to some English watering-place or journey to Italy. For his own part, Shelley was inclined towards spending the winter in Pisa. The warmer climate, he was assured, would act as a certain remedy for his ailments. It was, moreover, much to be desired that little Alba should be placed under her father's care. If Byron was ever to take an interest in his child, he ought to know her bright infancy and pretty baby ways. She and Shelley's little William were indeed fast friends, and talked to each other in the gladdest babblement of babyhood; but William had now a sister of his own to be his future companion. The presence of Alba in Shelley's house was embarrassing, and Claire's peculiar interest in her had given rise to monstrous and revolting speculations. If Claire was the mother of this "Miss Auburn" (such was the feigned name of the yet unnamed Allegra), who was her father? In July Shelley had proposed to Byron that the little one should be placed under the care of two respectable young ladies in Marlow, who would undertake the charge of her, as a provisional measure until she could be entrusted to her father's hands. Now the prospect of a journey to Italy suggested an easy mode of conveying the child safe to Venice, where Byron was at present residing.

It was happy for Shelley that in Mary he had a counsellor CHAP. IV.  
 full of love, and at the same time just, considerate, and discreet, Jan. 1817-  
 On receiving tidings of the physician's opinion she wrote as Mar. 1818.  
 follows :—

*Mary to Shelley.*

Marlow, September 26, 1817.

You tell me to decide between Italy and the sea. I think, dearest, if—what you do not seem to doubt, but which I do a little—our finances are in sufficiently good a state to bear the expense of the journey, our inclination ought to decide. I feel some reluctance at quitting our present settled state, but as we *must* leave Marlow, I do not know that stopping short on this side of the Channel would be pleasanter to me than crossing it. At any rate, my love, do not let us encumber ourselves with a lease again. However, consult in your own mind, and say frankly in your next, if your feelings are decided enough on the subject, if Italy would not give you far more pleasure than a settlement on the coast of Kent; if it would, say so, and so be it. Perhaps Alba renders the thought of expense pretty nearly equal whichever way you decide. Do you glow with the thoughts of a clear sky, pure air, and burning sun? You would then enjoy life. For my own part, I shall have tolerable health anywhere, and for pleasure Italy certainly holds forth a charming prospect. But are we rich enough to enjoy ourselves there? . . .

I have not been out yet; this day was too windy and rainy, and indeed the season advances very fast, which renders Alba's affairs pressing. We must decide to go ourselves, or send her, within a month. It is well that your poem was finished before this edict was issued against the imagination; but my pretty eclogue will suffer from it. . . . Your babes are quite well; but I have had some pain in perceiving or imagining that Willy has almost forgotten me, and seems to like Elise better; but this may be fancy, and will certainly disappear when I can get out and about again. Clara is well, and gets very pretty. How happy I shall be when my own dear love comes again to kiss me and my babes! As it seems that your health principally depends upon care, pray, dearest, take every possible precaution. I have often observed that rain has a very bad effect upon you; if, therefore, you have rain in London,

CHAP. IV. do not go out in it. . . . Adieu, dearest. Come back as soon as  
 Jan. 1817- you may, and in the mean time write me long, long letters.  
 Mar. 1818.

Your own

MARY.

Mr. Baxter thinks that Mr. Booth keeps Isabel from writing to me. He has written to her to-day warmly in praise of us both, and telling her by all means not to let the acquaintance cool, and that in such a case her loss would be much greater than mine. He has taken a prodigious fancy to us, and is continually talking of and praising "Queen Mab," which he vows is the best poem of modern days.

*Mary to Shelley.*

Marlow, September 28, 1817.

DEAREST LOVE,

Claire arrived yesterday night, and whether it might be that she was in a croaking humour (in ill spirits she certainly was), or whether she represented things as they really were, I know not, but certainly affairs did not seem to wear a very good face. She talks of Harriet's debts to a large amount, and something about Longdill's having undertaken for them, so that they must be paid. She mentioned also that you were entering into a *post-obit* transaction. Now this requires our serious consideration on one account. These things (*post-obits*), as you well know, are affairs of wonderful length; and if you must complete one before you settle on going to Italy, Alba's departure ought certainly not to be delayed. You do not seem enough to feel the absolute necessity there is that she should join her father with every possible speed. . . .

You are teased to death by all kinds of annoying affairs, dearest. How much do I wish that I were with you! but that is impossible; but pray in your letters do be more explicit! and tell me all your plans. You have advertised the house, but have you given Maddocks any orders about how to answer the applicants? and have you yet settled for Italy or the sea? and do you know how to get money to convey us there, and to buy the things that will be absolutely necessary before our departure? And can you do anything for my father before we go? Or, after all, would it not be as well to inhabit a small house by the sea-shore, where our expenses would be much less than they are at present? You have not mentioned yet to Godwin your thoughts of Italy; but if you

determine soon, I would have you do it, as those things are always better to be talked of some days before they take place. CHAP. IV.

I took my first walk to-day. What a dreadfully cold place this house is! I was shivering over a fire, and the garden looked cold and dismal; but as soon as I got into the road, I found, to my infinite surprise, that the sun was shining, and the air warm and delightful. I wish Willy to be my companion in my future walks; to further which plan will you send down, if possible by Monday's coach, a seal-skin fur hat for him? it must be a fashionable round shape, *for a boy* mention particularly, and have a narrow gold riband round it, that it may be taken in if too large. . . . I am just now surrounded by babes. Alba is scratching and crowing, William amusing himself with wrapping a shawl round him, and Miss Clara staring at the fire. It is now only four o'clock, so I shall put by my letter for the present, to finish it after dinner. Adieu, dear love. I cannot express to you how anxious I am to hear from you of your health, affairs, and plans.

Jan. 1817-  
Mar. 1818.

Half-past seven. . . . Now pray, dearest, dearest love, write me a long letter; tell me that this absence does not make you wretched, but that you keep up your spirits; tell me what you have decided on, and what your difficulties are. I think you took up my journal of our first travels with you; if you did, tell me if you have done anything with it, or if you have any prospect; if you have, I will go on instantly with the letters. Adieu, dearest love! I want to say again, that you may fully answer me, how very, very anxious I am to know the whole extent of your present difficulties and pursuits; and remember also that if this *post-obit* is to be a long business, Alba must go before it is finished. Willy is just going to bed. When I ask him where you are, he makes me a long speech that I do not understand. But I know, my own one, that you are away, and I wish that you were with me. Come soon, my own only love.

Your affectionate girl,

M. W. S.

What of "Frankenstein"? and your own poem—have you fixed on a name? Give my love to Godwin, when Mrs. Godwin is not by, or you must give it to her, and I do not love her.

*Mary to Shelley.*

Marlow, September 30, 1817.

You will have received, my dearest, an answer to most of your questions in the two letters you have seen of mine since the one that

CHAP. IV. has arrived to-day from you. We must make our decision instantly.  
 Jan. 1817- Let us, past all doubt, quit the house. You have no conception how  
 Mar. 1818. cold it is as the winter advances; none of the back rooms receive any sun at any time. The garden looks bleak, shaded as it is by the house, now that the sun does not rise high in the horizon, while the road in front is warm and cheerful. Let us *flit*, therefore (as the Scotch people call it), as soon as possible. I hope by to-morrow's post Madocks will receive directions from you how to answer the people that apply.

But Italy or the sea! Clare has hinted *post-obits*, etc., to me, which makes it appear doubtful to me whether we can go this winter. Perhaps I incline to a quiet home on the Kent coast; there it must be for warmth; but all must be decided by your own feelings concerning your health. Make your determination, and I will abide by it. But Alba! Indeed, my love, her departure must not be delayed. I have given my opinion concerning that in my former letters.

After all, dear Shelley, indecision will be our bane. Talk with Godwin and Hunt, or, if you will, consult only with your own mind; but determine in one way instantly, or of course we shall get into a scrape. You must see plainly that we cannot wait thus undecided long.

Tell Hunt that I like everything in his political article of this week except the title.\* How are they all? and the piping fauns and the piping babes. . . .

Alba makes me hesitate chiefly about going abroad. I do not see how she is to get there unless we take her. Claire talks of the imprudence of sending her through the means of the Hunts; and then, you know, she has talked to you about promises of writing and sending accounts. Now this is all very well, if there were any practicability in the thing. But promises with Albè! The first thing that engaged his attention would put them all out of his head. And negotiated by letter also! Why, it is the labour of several months to get any kind of answer. The child can never depart! In fact, Claire, although she, in a blind kind of manner, sees the necessity of it, does not wish her to go, and will instinctively place all kinds of difficulties in the way of ours, as it is a very difficult task. *Our* going would obviate all this, and the

\* Article in the *Examiner*, "Porcupine renewing his Old Quills, or Remarks on Mr. Cobbett's Strange and Sudden Bristling up against Sir F. Burdett."

actual expense of the journey would not be greater. Let these weigh with you in a wondrous weight, for if by imprudent delay we find (which is indeed far from being improbable) that the fair prospect of Alba's being brought up by her father is taken away, how shall we reproach ourselves! Claire will then also see the extreme evil and distress of her situation, and not easily forgive us for having destroyed her child's future by want of firmness. I almost dread the answer you may receive from the capricious Albè to your *capitulations*.

CHAP. IV.  
Jan. 1817-  
Mar. 1818.

Have you seen Cobbett's 23rd number, to the Borough-mongers? Why, he appears to be making out a list for a proscription. I actually shudder to read it. A revolution in this country would not be *bloodless* if that man has any power in it. He is, I fear, somewhat of a Marius, perhaps of a Marat. I like him not; I fear he is a bad man. He encourages in the multitude the worst possible human passion—*revenge*, or (as he would probably give it that abominable *Christian name*) *retribution*.

Now, dearest, I believe I have said all I can say on the subject, humbly offering my reasons, and leaving it to yours, the manly part, to decide.

I am pretty well. Clara and William are well.

Affectionately yours,

MARY.

On Friday evening, October 3, Shelley was at home with Mary; but only for one night. Money matters, his own and Godwin's, obliged him to be in town for at least three days; and while engaged in these affairs he must also find time for correcting proofs of his "*Laon and Cythna*," now in the printer's hands.

*Mary to Shelley.*

Marlow, October 5, 1817.

I am rather tired, my best beloved, with a letter I have written to the Hunts; but this you will hold no excuse for not writing to you; and in fact I have many things to say, but the hope that you will be enabled to keep your promise, and return Tuesday, makes me keep back many questions and thoughts that will be better answered then.

Your babes are very well; but Willy suffers from the cold, and



CHAP. IV I sadly want some flannel both for him and myself; indeed, the  
 Jan. 1817- poor little fellow is very susceptible of cold, and suffers a good  
 Mar. 1818. deal; but Marianne [Mrs. Hunt] would give too high a price, and  
 I do not like to ask Mrs. Godwin, and *you* are no judge.

Remember, dearest, to bring me a good thick book to write extracts in, *ruled*. I send you a list of some books that I selected from the "Manuel du libraire," which I think might be useful to me, especially those I have marked under; would you try to get them, or some of them? Bring down also your proofs.

How happy shall I be, my own dear love, to see you again! Your last was so very, very short a visit; and after you were gone, I thought of so many things I had to say to you, and had no time to say. Come Tuesday, dearest, and let us enjoy some of each other's company; come and see your sweet babes and the little Commodore [Allegra]; she is lively and an uncommonly interesting child. I never see her without thinking of the expressions in my Mother's letters concerning Fanny. If a mother's eyes were not partial, she seemed like this Alba. She mentions her intelligent eyes and great vivacity; but this is a melancholy subject.

I have written to Hunt; but tell him, over and above, that our piano is in tune, and that I wish he would come down by Monday's coach to play me a few tunes. He will think I jest, but it would really give me the greatest pleasure. I would make love to him *pour passer le temps*, that he might not regret the company of his Marianne and Thornton. I do not tell you to tell him the latter part of this message, but you may if you please.

I shall not hear from you to-morrow, unless indeed you write by the coach, nor shall I write. You will not receive this letter if you come. Hunt might come with you. Behave kindly towards him for his kindness to you. Good night, my own best Shelley. Tell me, have you suffered from your journey? Tell me also, dearest, if I may expect you; but you will answer this in person if I may. A thousand of kisses for you, my own one.

Your affectionate

PECKSIE.

*Shelley to Mary Shelley.*

[Monday] October 6, 1817.

You will not see me to-morrow. I will try, if possible, to come by the Wednesday's coach, if I do not hear anything in the mean time from you to detain me.

My own Mary, would it not be better for you to come to London CHAP. IV. at once? I think we could quite as easily do something with the Jan. 1817 - house if you were in London—that is to say, all of you—as in the Mar. 1818. country.

In that case I would advise the packing up of all the books which we determine to take with us in a large box, and sending them here in the first instance. I would then lock up the library, and leave the cook in the house until something was done; first seeing Maddocks, and putting the safety of the whole in his charge. I mean you should do that if you like this proposal; if not, write instantly, directing to Longdill's, or else I shall not get your letter in time. Write at all events, and if you negative my proposal, I will come down the same evening if possible, or at least will write by the coach, and come down the next.

We must go to Italy, on every ground. This weather does me great mischief. I nurse myself, and these kind people nurse me with great care. I think of you, my own beloved, and study the minutest things relative to my health. I suffer to-day with violent pain in the side, which prevents me to-day from going out at all. I have thus put off engagements with Longdill and Godwin, which must be done to-morrow.

I have borrowed £250 from Horace Smith, which is now at my banker's.

Dearest and best of living beings, how much do your letters console me when I am away from you! Your letter to-day gave me the greatest delight; so soothing, so powerful, and quiet are your expressions, that it is almost like folding you to my heart. To-morrow, therefore, beloved, I shall not come, but the day after certainly, if you decide on that.

I should take rather spacious lodgings if you come up.

I shall forget none of your commissions.

Kiss all the little ones; poor little William—is he so cold?—and Alba and Clara.

My most affectionate love to Claire, and tell her that I have offered her book to Lackington and to Taylor and Hessey, and that they have both declined.

I can scarcely write to-day, but shall be better to-morrow. Adieu, my dearest love; take twenty kisses to your sweet lips.

P. B. S.

## CHAP. IV.

Jan. 1817-  
Mar. 1818.

*Mary to Shelley.*

Marlow [Tuesday], October 7, 1817.

You complain of the weather, dear love, but I have seldom known any more pleasant, out in the air that is to say, for in the house we are glad to creep over the fire as if it were Christmas.

Your account of our expenses is by very much too favourable. You say that you have only borrowed £250. Our debts at Marlow are greater than you are aware of. We cannot hope to sell the house for £1200; and to think of going abroad with only about £200 would be madness, for that would not much more than carry us there, and then we have to live until the end of December. In fact I do not think we can go if we cannot find some means of raising money.

I know not how it is, my love, but in the middle of the day I feel my spirits sink; the children, everything, annoys me, and I am not well again till after dinner. I know I ought to take some nourishment at that time, but bread is the only thing I can take. I shall expect you Wednesday, my own love; and Willy, who has become much better tempered, will, I have no doubt, be very glad to see you. The behaviour of this child to the two little girls would be an argument in favour of those who advocate instinctive natural affection. He will not go near Alba, and if she approaches him, he utters a fretful cry until she is removed; \* but he kisses Clara, strokes her arms and feet, and laughs to find them so soft and pretty. As for the little lady herself, she is quite a little doll, so diminutive, yet well made and upright, already holding her little head steadily on her shoulders.

I must say that the paragraph from my letter which Hunt has done me the honour to quote cuts a very foolish figure; † it is so femininely expressed that all men of letters will, on reading it, acquit me of having a *masculine* understanding. If Hunt had told me he meant to put anything of mine in, I think I could have worded it with dignity. . . .

Remember my book for transcribing. I want to practise

\* Shelley in September described little Alba and William as fast friends.

† Hunt, in a note to the leading article of the *Examiner* for October 5, 1817, quoted the paragraph about Cobbett from Mary's letter to Shelley of September 30, introducing it with the words: "A lady of what is called a masculine understanding, that is to say, of great natural abilities, not obstructed by a *bad* education, writes thus in a letter to her husband."

drawing a little before I go to Italy. I have accordingly purchased pencils, but I find that it is too cold to draw out of doors. CHAP. IV.  
Jan. 1817-  
Mar. 1818.

Bring down your proofs, and if you can, my brooch.

The little bright-eyed Commodore [Allegra] is as bluff as ever, and as gay. Have you written to Furnivall and (what I dread to ask) Charles Clairmont? Adieu, my own love; get rid of that nasty side-ache. You will tell me that the Italian sun will be the best physician. Be it so. Come Wednesday; I long to see you.

Most affectionately your

PECKSIE.

Shelley did not come on Wednesday. An undated fragment of a letter addressed by him to Mary was probably written on the evening of that day. In this he reviews the position of affairs.

*Shelley to Mary Shelley.*

[London, Wednesday, October 8, 1817].

MY SWEETEST AND ONLY LOVE,

The anxiety which I have suffered for the last two days has been very great. I did not get your letter till this morning, or rather this evening, when I went to Longdill's. I sent and went in vain to Hookham's. I am now relieved, and perhaps she whom I love far more than myself, and whose anxieties are far more painful to me than my own, is at this moment wondering if I shall come this evening, and will be so disappointed if I do not. I shall not come. I waited and waited for your letter, and was too late for the coach.

Now, dearest, let me talk to you. I think we ought to go to Italy. I think my health might receive a renovation there, for want of which perhaps I should never entirely overcome that state of diseased action which is so painful to my beloved. I think Alba ought to be with her father. This is a thing of incredible importance to the happiness, perhaps, of many beings. It might be managed without our going there. Yes; but not without an expense which would in fact suffice to settle us comfortably in a spot where I might be regaining that health which you consider so valuable. It is valuable to you, my own dearest. I see too plainly that you will never be quite happy till I am well. Of myself I do not speak, for I feel only for you.

CHAP. IV. First, then, Money. I am sure that if I ask Horace Smith he  
 Jan. 1817- will lend me £200 or even £250 more. I did not like to do it from  
 Mar. 1818. delicacy, and a wish to take only just enough; but I am quite certain that he would lend the money.

Next, the House. We have decided at all events to quit it. Let us look the truth boldly in the face. We gave we will say £1200 for the house. Well, we can get if we like £60 a year for the bare walls, and sell the furniture so as to realize £75 for every £100. This is losing scarcely anything, especially if we consider it in fact only so much money borrowed on *post-obits*, which in fact is cheaper than ever before. But all this is nothing. Godwin? Well, I am trying what I can do now, and I am not quite hopeless. I forgot about the house to mention the other side of the alternative, which is, to let it furnished. This is not so well. My advice is that you should come to town, and soon prepare for departure.

I shall be with you, my beloved, to-morrow evening; but I *may* not, as I have an appointment with Longdill, which it is *barely possible* should not be.

Returning to Marlow for brief visits, on one of which (October 20 to October 22) Godwin accompanied him, Shelley continued to spend his time for the most part in London, engaged probably in money transactions; and though longing for his presence, Mary feared to urge her desire that he should hasten to her side, for there were debts hanging over him which at Marlow might lead to an arrest.

### *Mary to Shelley.*

October 15, 1817.

I intended, my best love, to have sent the letters by to-morrow morning's coach. I shall not be able, but depend upon them next day.

I do not at all expect you by to-morrow evening, but perhaps the day after; and do the Godwins come? I shall write to them by this post. Your babes are quite well. Clara's eyes begin to emulate the pretty Commodore's, and Willy is fonder of her than ever; he is a sweet little fellow. I wonder how he will like Italy.

Hunt was hardly strong enough in his paper to-day.\* The horror

\* Leading article in the *Examiner*, October 12, 1817: "Fellow-creatures suffered to die in the streets."

of a man's dying in the street was represented as terrible; but was it enough impressed on his reader the superabundant capacity of the spectator to have relieved him?

CHAP. IV.  
Jan. 1817-  
Mar. 1818.

I cannot write a long letter to-day, but I will a very long one to-morrow.

Your own  
PECKSIE.

*Mary to Shelley.*

October 16, 1817.

So you do not come to-night, love, nor any night; you are always away, and this absence is long, and becomes each day more dreary. Poor Curran! so he is dead, and a sod is on his breast, as four years ago I heard him prophesy would be the case within that year.\*

Nothing is done, you say in your letter, and indeed I do not expect anything to be done these many months. This, if you continued well, would not give me so much pain, except on Alba's account. If she were with her father, I could wait patiently, but the thought of what may come "between the cup and the lip"—between now and her arrival at Venice—is a heavy burthen on my soul. He may change his mind, or go to Greece, or to the devil; and then what happens?

My dearest Shelley, be not, I entreat you, too self-negligent; yet what can you do? If you were here, you might retort that question upon me; but when I write to you, I indulge false hopes of some miraculous answer springing up in the interval.

Does not Longdill treat you ill? He makes out long bills, and does nothing. You say nothing of the late arrest, and what may be the consequences.† And may they not detain you? and may you not be detained many months? for Godwin must not be left unprovided. All these things make me run over the months, and know not where to put my finger and say—during this your Italian journey shall commence.

Yet when I say that it is on Alba's account that I am anxious, this is only when you are away, and with too much faith I believe you to be well. When I see you, drooping and languid, in pain,

\* J. Philpot Curran died on October 14, 1817.

† Perhaps an arrest of Godwin.

CHAP. IV. and unable to enjoy life, then on your account I ardently wish for  
 Jan. 1817- bright skies and Italian sun.  
 Mar. 1818.

You will have received, I hope, the manuscript that I sent yesterday in a parcel to Hookham.\* I am glad to hear that the printing goes on well; bring down all that you can with you.

If we were free and I had no anxiety, what delight would Godwin's visit give me! As it is, I fear that it will make me dreadfully miserable. Cannot you come with him? By the way you write, I hardly expect you this week; but is it really so?

I think Alba's remaining here extremely dangerous, yet I do not see what is to be done. Your babes are well. Clara already replies to her nurse's caresses by smiles, and Willy kisses her with great tenderness.

Your affectionate

MARY.

Willie has just said good night to me; he kisses the letter, and says good night to you. Clara is asleep.

*Mary to Shelley.*

Marlow, Saturday, October 18, 1817.

Mr. Wright has called here to-day, my dearest Shelley, and wished to see you. I can hardly have any doubt that his business is of the same nature as that which made him call last week. You will judge, but it appears to me that an arrest on Monday will follow your arrival Sunday.

My love, you ought not to come down. A long, long week has passed, and when at length I am allowed to expect you, I am obliged to tell you not to come. This is very cruel. You may easily judge that I am not happy; my spirits sink during this continued absence. Godwin, too, will come down; he will talk as if we meant to stay here; and I must—must I?—tell fifty prevarications or direct *lies*. When I thought that you would be here also, I knew that your presence would lead to general conversation; but Claire will absent herself; we shall be alone, and he will talk of our private affairs. I am sure that I shall never be able to support it.

And when is this to end?

Italy appears to me farther off than ever, and the idea of it

\* While at Marlow, from Friday, October 10, to Sunday evening, October 12, Shelley had spent some time in transcribing his poem, "Laon and Cythna."

never enters my mind but Godwin enters also, and makes it lie CHAP. IV.  
 heavy at my heart. Had you not better speak? you might relieve Jan. 1817-  
 me from a heavy burden. Surely he cannot be blind to the many Mar. 1818.  
 reasons that urge us. Your health, the indispensable one, if every  
 other were away. I assure you that if my Father said, "Yes, you  
 must go; do what you can for me; I know that you will do all  
 you can," I should, far from writing so melancholy a letter, prepare  
 everything with a light heart, arrange our affairs here, and come  
 up to town, to await patiently the effect of your efforts. I know  
 not whether it is early habit or affection, but the idea of his silent  
 quiet disapprobation makes me weep as it did in the days of my  
 childhood.

I shall not see you to-morrow. God knows when I shall see  
 you! Claire is for ever wearying, with her idle and childish com-  
 plaints. Can you not send me some consolation?

Ever your affectionate

MARY.

Mary Shelley's fears of an arrest were not realized, and  
 Godwin's visit went by without any recorded disagreeable  
 incident. Interested through his novel of "Mandeville," now  
 on the eve of publication, in the civil war of the seventeenth  
 century, Godwin drove with Mary through Wycombe to visit  
 Hampden, where might be seen the famous spot of land  
 assessed for the famous twenty shillings of ship-money, and,  
 in the village church, the monument of the patriot slain at  
 Chalgrove Field. After a walk next day to Bisham Woods  
 with Shelley and Peacock, and a serious talk with Claire, of  
 what import we can but guess, he took the stage-coach for  
 London, in company with his son-in-law, on Wednesday,  
 October 22, and the dreaded visit was over. When, two days  
 later, Shelley was again in Marlow, he brought as a new  
 visitor his acquaintance, Walter Coulson, a young *élève* of  
 Jeremy Bentham, reporter for the *Chronicle*, afterwards editor  
 of the *Globe*, a Cornishman, and himself a giant Cormoran of  
 encyclopædic knowledge. Shelley's presence was, however,  
 once more required in town, and there, after he had spent



CHAP. IV. some six nights in Skinner Street, his wife joined him, and  
 Jan. 1817- the pleasant social intercourse of the opening of the year with  
 Mar. 1818. the Hunts, Godwin, Keats, Coulson, renewed itself in these dim autumnal days. "I went to Godwin's," Crabb Robinson notes in his diary for November 6. "Mr. Shelley was there. I had never seen him before. His youth, and a resemblance to Southey, particularly in his voice, raised a pleasing impression, which was not altogether destroyed by his conversation, though it is vehement and arrogant and intolerant. He was very abusive of Southey, whom he spoke of as having sold himself to the Court. And this he maintained with the usual party slang. . . . Shelley spoke of Wordsworth with less bitterness, but with an insinuation of his insincerity." The year 1817, the year of popular commotion and of alarm on the part of those who maintained that freedom should be sought through order, was that which saw the surreptitious publication by a knavish bookseller of Southey's "Wat Tyler," a lively dramatic sketch written twenty-three years since in his early fervour of Republicanism. The *Examiner* had fallen with a bitter glee on this poor evidence of Southey's change of principles. Mr. William Smith, the Liberal member for Norwich, had pointed in the House of Commons to the Laureate as a servile renegade; and Southey had vindicated himself in a memorable letter, strong with sound thinking and masculine indignation. It is not surprising that Shelley should have seen things from Leigh Hunt's point of view, and that, seeing things thus, he should have expressed himself with characteristic impetuosity.

On the morning of the day on which Crabb Robinson met Shelley at Godwin's house, the Regent's only child, the Princess Charlotte, died in childbirth. Her youth and beauty, the innocence and sweetness of her life and character, the fairness of this one blossom sprung from an ill stock, had won upon the heart of the English people, and the event was felt as if it were a national calamity. As Shelley conceived it,

there was indeed cause for mourning in the untimely death of one who had so lately been full of life and joy and hope; yet there were causes for bitterer grief in England little attended to or felt. Once more, therefore, the "Hermit of Marlow" would lift up his voice in prophetic utterance. On the morning after the death of the Princess, three men, convicted of having taken part in what was styled "the Derbyshire insurrection," were led forth to be executed. The rising in June of a few operatives, or, as they were then named, "manufacturers," had been swiftly quelled by the appearance of less than a score of dragoons. It was said by enemies of the government that the outbreak had been stimulated by a spy and informer, Oliver, in government pay. On November 7 the sentence of the law on Brandreth, Turner, and Ludlam was carried into effect; they were drawn on hurdles to the place of execution, and were hanged and decapitated in the presence of an excited and horror-stricken crowd. To Shelley it seemed that the discontent which led these half-educated or wholly uneducated men to the violence which he deplored, had been caused by a real grievance under which all Englishmen suffered. The creation of a vast national debt had produced a second aristocracy beside the aristocracy of birth—an aristocracy of moneyed worldlings, subsisting on the taxes of the nation, and lacking the chivalric virtues of the elder aristocracy. "It was a moot question," writes Leigh Hunt, "when he entered your room, whether Shelley would begin with some half-pleasant, half-pensive joke, or quote something Greek, or ask some question about public affairs. He once came upon me at Hampstead, when I had not seen him for some time; and after grasping my hands with both his, in his usual fervent manner, he sat down and looked at me very earnestly, with a deep though not melancholy interest in his face. We were sitting with our knees to the fire, to which we had been getting nearer and nearer, in the comfort of finding ourselves together. The pleasure of seeing him was my only

CHAP. IV.  
Jan. 1817—  
Mar. 1818.

CHAP. IV. feeling at the moment; and the air of domesticity about us  
 Jan. 1817- was so complete, that I thought he was going to speak on  
 Mar. 1818. some family matter, either his or my own, when he asked me, at the close of an intensity of pause, what was 'the amount of the national debt.'" Shelley's question should hardly have surprised his friend, for the amount of the national debt served with Shelley as a measure of the people's sufferings, and it weighed at times like a nightmare upon his heart. Were the people duly represented in Parliament, they could indeed state their case, and endeavour to abate their grievance; but when the cry for Parliamentary Reform was met by suspensions of the Habeas Corpus and prosecutions of the press, what could be expected but such rash and futile manifestations of popular passion as that which resulted in the hideous executions at Derby?

In the *Examiner* for Sunday, November 9, Shelley read the report, with all its harrowing details, of the bloody work in the north. Two evenings later Godwin and Charles Ollier took tea with the Shelleys at Mabledon Place, and there was talk with Ollier of a pamphlet to be written by Shelley on the grief of the Royal House as viewed in connection with the deeper cause for national mourning in the wrongs of a much-afflicted people. When the visitors had said good night, Shelley hastened to set down in writing the thoughts and feelings which laboured within him for utterance.\* "Shelley begins a pamphlet," Mary records in her journal of the 11th; and on the 12th, "Shelley finishes his pamphlet." But before the last paragraphs were written he had eagerly despatched a note to Ollier.

19, Mabledon Place, November 12, 1817.

DEAR SIR,

I enclose what I have written of a pamphlet on the subject of our conversation the other evening. I wish it to be sent

\* Ollier had also called on Monday, November 10, and probably the pamphlet was first spoken of on that occasion—"the other evening" of Shelley's letter.

to press without an hour's delay. I don't think the whole will make a pamphlet larger or so large as my last, but the printer can go on with this and send me a proof, and the rest of the MSS. shall be sent before evening. If you should have any objections to publish it, you can state them as soon as the whole is printed, before the title goes to press, though I don't think that you will, as the subject, though treated boldly, is treated delicately.

Your obedient servant,

P. B. SHELLEY.

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"An Address to the People on the Death of the Princess Charlotte" was perhaps never published, in the full sense of the word. It is stated that not more than twenty copies were printed; and we can well believe that in 1817 Ollier was little inclined to take his chance of a government prosecution.\* "Nature has been kinder to Mr. Burke than he is to her;" so wrote Paine when retorting, in his "Rights of Man," upon Burke for his eloquent outburst on chivalry and Marie Antoinette. "He is not affected by the reality of distress touching his heart. but by the showy resemblance of it striking his imagination. He pities the plumage, but forgets the dying bird."† These last words—"we pity the plumage, but forget the dying bird"—were chosen by Shelley as the motto of his pamphlet. The English people were overwhelmed with sorrow because a young and beautiful woman had perished with her babe. Yes: to her mourning was due. But there was another fairer, nobler, more queenly, for whose death no tears were shed—the virgin Liberty, not taken from us by the will of God, but foully murdered by man. And yet, even in her ruin, all hope was not extinct. "Let us follow the corpse of British Liberty slowly and reverentially to its tomb; and if some glorious Phantom should appear, and make its throne of broken swords and sceptres and royal crowns trampled in the dust, let us say that the Spirit of Liberty has arisen from its grave, and left

\* The statement as to the number printed was made by Thomas Rodd, who reprinted the pamphlet, not later than 1843.

† "Rights of Man," 3rd edit., 1791, p. 26.

CHAP. IV. all that was gross and mortal there, and kneel down and worship it as our Queen." \* The same contrast between the lighter affliction of England in its loss of a Princess and the more grievous calamity of a nation's wrongs had struck Leigh Hunt, and formed the subject of the leading article of the number of the *Examiner* which appeared at the beginning of the week after that in which Shelley's pamphlet had been written.

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Mar. 1818.

During these days Mr. M'Millan's printers were making progress with the sheets of "Laon and Cythna," and by November 21 the poem was almost ready for publication.† The seven hundred and fifty copies which made up the edition were printed at Shelley's expense, the publishers, Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, and Messrs. Ollier, undertaking to sell it on the author's account. In October he had attempted in vain to find a purchaser of the copyright. To whom the following interesting letter was addressed we cannot certainly say—perhaps to one of the firm of Longman and Co., who had lately published Moore's "Lalla Rookh."‡

\* Compare the close of Shelley's sonnet on England in 1819, beginning "An old, mad, blind, despised, and dying king"—

"Religion Christless, Godless, a book sealed—  
A Senate—time's worst statute unrepealed,—  
Are graves from which a glorious Phantom may  
Burst to illumine our tempestuous day."

† In the *Examiner* for November 30 appeared eight stanzas from "Laon and Cythna"—"a poem just published by Percy Shelley." On November 21 Mr. B. M'Millan furnished his account, which is of interest as informing us of the number of copies printed. The nineteen sheets charged for give just the number of pages in Shelley's book.

P. B. Shelley. To B. M'Millan, Nov. 21, 1817.

To printing "Laon and Cythna," a poem, 8vo, with notes, nineteen sheets, No. 750, at £3 4s. 0d. per sheet	...	...	...	...	£	s.	d.
					60	16	0
To do Leaf	...	...	...	...	0	15	0
To alterations in proof	...	...	...	...	3	6	0
To 28 reams and half and 4 quires of fine demy, at 37s. per ream	...	...	...	...	53	1	6
To 750 labels and paper	...	...	...	...	0	7	6

£118 6 0

‡ The original is in the possession of Mr. R. E. Egerton-Warburton, of Arley

*Shelley to a Publisher.*CHAP. IV

13, Lisson Grove North, October 13, 1817.

Jan. 1817-  
Mar. 1818.

SIR,

I send you the four first sheets of my poem entitled "Laon and Cythna, or the Revolution of the Golden City."

I believe this commencement affords a sufficient specimen of the work. I am conscious indeed that some of the concluding cantos, when "the plot thickens" and human passions are brought into more critical situations of development, are written with more energy and clearness; and that to see a work of which unity is one of the qualifications aimed at by the author in a disjointed state is, in a certain degree, unfavourable to the general impression. If, however, you submit it to Mr. Moore's judgment, he will make due allowance for these circumstances. The whole poem, with the exception of the first canto and part of the last, is a mere human story without the smallest intermixture of supernatural interference. The first canto is indeed in some measure a distinct poem, though very necessary to the wholeness of the work. I say this because if it were all written in the manner of the first canto, I could not expect that it would be interesting to any great number of people. I have attempted in the progress of my work to speak to the common elementary emotions of the human heart, so that though it is the story of violence and revolution, it is relieved by milder pictures of friendship and love and natural affections. The scene is supposed to be laid in Constantinople and modern Greece, but without much attempt at minute delineation of Mahometan manners. It is in fact a tale illustrative of such a Revolution as might be supposed to take place in an European nation, acted upon by the opinions of what has been called (erroneously, as I think) the modern philosophy, and contending with antient notions and the supposed advantage derived from them to those who support them. It is a Revolution of this kind that is the *beau ideal*, as it were, of the French Revolution, but produced by the influence of individual genius and out of general knowledge. The authors of it are supposed to be my hero and heroine, whose names appear in the title. My private friends have expressed to me a very high, and therefore I do not doubt a very erroneous, judgment of my

Hall, Northwich, Cheshire, who has kindly permitted me to make it public. I have been unable fully to trace out its history, and in this respect it differs from the other letters printed in these volumes for the first time.

CHAP. IV. work. However, of this I can determine neither way. I have  
 Jan. 1817- resolved to give it a fair chance, and my wish, therefore, is, first, to  
 Mar. 1818. know whether you would purchase my interest in the copyright—  
 an arrangement which, if there be any truth in the opinions of my  
 friends Lord Byron and Mr. Leigh Hunt of my powers, cannot be  
 disadvantageous to you; and, in the second place, how far you are  
 willing to be the publisher of it on my own account if such an  
 arrangement, which I should infinitely prefer, cannot be made.

I rely, however, on your having the goodness at least to send  
 the sheets to Mr. Moore, and ask his opinion of their merits.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your very obedient servant,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

Poetry—poetry, above all, such as “Laon and Cythna,”  
 remote from common sympathies, exalted, copious—is seldom  
 regarded by the wary publisher with enthusiasm; and Shelley  
 might have deemed himself not unfortunate if he had had no  
 other cause for complaint than that a man of business declined  
 to invest his capital in the Golden City revolutionized by  
 Laon and Cythna. But an unusual trouble was in store  
 for him and his work. Having woven his web of glittering  
 abstractions around himself, Shelley was insensible to the  
 shock which his glorifying of forbidden love must give to the  
 moral sense of society. Never, perhaps, having lived in the  
 intimacy of one who truly drew spiritual life from the faith of  
 Theism or of Christianity, Shelley could not feel how words,  
 which to him seemed but a protest against prejudice and  
 superstition, would carry pain and sudden shock to hearts  
 that were tender, innocent, and full of devout reverence. It  
 was a blindness of the soul to feel no moral sympathy with  
 those whose intellectual convictions he opposed. But men of  
 the world, living far less of the life ideal than Shelley, could  
 perceive what was invisible to him. The printer, Mr. Buchanan  
 McMillan, not improbably called the attention of the Olliers to  
 certain passages—few in number but formidable in substance  
 —which could not fail to arouse public indignation, which  
 might even draw down a prosecution for blasphemy. Not a

moment was to be lost. Some few copies had been issued, and CHAP. IV. already voices of protest were raised. Ollier did not hesitate, Jan. 1817-  
Mar. 1818. and announced his not unreasonable decision that either the offending passages must be removed, or he must decline to appear as publisher of the volume. To Shelley, who during six months had wrought upon his poem with an intensity of ardour, who had poured into its verse all his faiths and hopes and illuminated charities, who had felt towards this impassioned song as a prophet might feel towards the last burden of his lips which should soon be silent in death, the unexpected decision of the principal publisher seemed a cruel and intolerable injustice. In the first moments of his disappointment he wrote to Ollier, with urgency, yet with a certain moderation of temper, beseeching him to reconsider his resolve.

*Shelley to Ollier.*

Marlow, December 11, 1817.

DEAR SIR,

It is to be regretted that you did not consult your own safety and advantage, if you consider it connected with the non-publication of my book, before your declining the publication, after having accepted it, would have operated to so extensive and serious an injury to my views as now. The instances of abuse and menace which you cite were such as you expected, and were, as I conceived, prepared for. If not, it would have been just to me to have given them their due weight and consideration before. You foresaw, you foreknew, all that these people would say. You do your best to condemn my book before it is given forth, because you publish it, and then withdraw, so that no other bookseller will publish it, because one has already rejected it. You must be aware of the great injury which you prepare for me. If I had never consulted your advantage, my book would have had a fair hearing. But now, it is first published, and then the publisher, as if the author had deceived him as to the contents of the work, and as if the inevitable consequence of its publication would be ignominy and punishment, and as if none should dare to touch it or look at it, retracts, at a period when nothing but the most extraordinary and unforeseen circumstances can justify his retraction.



CHAP. IV. I beseech you to reconsider the matter, for your sake no less  
 Jan. 1817- than for my own. Assume the high and the secure ground of  
 Mar. 1818. courage. The people who visit your shop, and the wretched bigot who gave his worthless custom to some other bookseller, are not the public. The public respect talent, and a large portion of them are already undeceived with regard to the prejudices which my book attacks. You would lose some customers, but you would gain others. Your trade would be diverted into a channel more consistent with your own principles. Not to say that a publisher is in no wise pledged to all the opinions of his publications, or to any; and that he may enter his protest with each copy sold, either against the truth or the discretion of the principles of the books he sells. But there is a much more important consideration in the case. You are, and have been to a certain extent, the publisher. I don't believe that if the book was quietly and regularly published the Government would touch anything of a character so refined and so remote from the conceptions of the vulgar. They would hesitate before they invaded a member of the higher circles of the republic of letters. But if they see us tremble, they will make no distinctions; they will feel their strength. You might bring the arm of the law down on us both by finching now. Directly these scoundrels see that people are afraid of them, they seize upon them and hold them up to mankind as criminals already convicted by their own fears. You lay yourself prostrate and they trample on you. How glad they would be to seize on any connexion of Hunt's by this most powerful of all their arms—the terrors and self-condemnation of their victim! Read all the *ex officio* cases and see what reward booksellers and printers have received for their submission.

If, contrary to common sense and justice, you resolve to give me up, you shall receive no detriment from a connexion with me in small matters, though you determine to inflict so serious a one on me in great. You shall not be at a farthing's expense. I shall still, so far as my powers extend, do my best to promote your interest. On the contrary supposition, even admitting you derive no benefit from the book itself—and it should be my care that you shall do so—I hold myself ready to make ample indemnity for any loss you may sustain.

There is one compromise that you might make, though that would be still injurious to me. Sherwood and Neely wished to be

the principal publishers—call on them and say that it was through a mistake that you undertook the principal direction of the work, as it was *my wish* that it should be theirs, and that I have written to you to that effect. This, if it would be advantageous to you, would be detrimental to, but not utterly destructive of, my views. To withdraw your name entirely would be to inflict a bitter and undeserved injury.

CHAP. IV.

Jan. 1817-

Mar. 1818.

Let me hear from you by return of post. I hope that you will be influenced to fulfil your engagement with me, and proceed with the publication, as justice to me, and indeed a well-understood estimate of your own interest and character, demand. I do hope that you will have too much regard to the well-chosen motto of your seal \* to permit the murmurs of a few bigots to outweigh the serious and permanent considerations presented in this letter. To their remonstrances you have only to reply, "I did not write the book; I am not responsible; here is the author's address; state your objections to him; I do no more than sell it to those who inquire for it, and if they are not pleased with their bargain, the author empowers me to receive the book and to return the money." As to the interference of Government, nothing is more improbable [than] that in any case it would be attempted; but if it should, it would be owing entirely to your perseverance in the groundless apprehensions which dictated your communication received this day, and conscious terror would be perverted into an argument of guilt.

I have just received a most kind and encouraging letter from Mr. Moore on the subject of my poem. I have the fairest chance of the public approaching my work with unbiassed and unperverted feeling; the fruit of reputation (and you know for *what purposes* I value it) is within my reach. It is for you, now you have been once named as publisher and have me in your power, to blast all this, and to hold up my literary character in the eye of mankind as that of a proscribed and rejected outcast. And for no evil that I have ever done you, but in return for a preference which, although you falsely now esteem injurious to you, was solicited by Hunt, and conferred by me as a source and proof of nothing but kind intentions.

Dear Sir,

I remain your sincere well-wisher,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

\* "In omnibus libertas."

## CHAP. IV.

Jan. 1817—  
Mar. 1818.

Ollier's reply was in some degree reassuring; perhaps he pointed out that by a few altered lines and a few cancelled pages all obstacles in the way of publication could be removed. With his habitual good feeling and courtesy Shelley wrote again.

*Shelley to Ollier.*

Marlow, December 13, 1817.

DEAR SIR,

The contents of your letter this morning certainly alters the question. No one is to be blamed, however heavy and unexpected is my disappointment. It is of the greatest importance that we should meet immediately, and, if the state of my health would have permitted, I should have come to town immediately on the receipt of your letter. As it is, I send my servant (that no delay or mistake may take place) with this note.

I need not say that I should be happy to see you if you could contrive to spend a few days with us. But my present letter is written under the persuasion that you could spare no day [so] conveniently as Sunday, and in a strong feeling of the *necessity of instant communication with you.*

The mails, which pass within a short distance of my house, leave Piccadilly at eight o'clock, and you will find a friendly welcome and a warm fire at the end of your journey.

I ought to say that I have received no parcel from you.

Your very obliged servant,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

On the day after that on which this invitation was written—a Sunday—Ollier was in Marlow, and on Monday Shelley went to work on the alterations of his poem.\* For a long time, says Peacock, Shelley refused to alter a line. It was not so; Shelley immediately complied with his publisher's request. "The whole of the alterations," writes Peacock, "were actually made in successive sittings, of what I may call

\* Mary's journal: "*Sunday, December 14.*—Read 14th Essay of Hume; write; walk. Shelley reads Berkeley. Ollier comes down. *Monday, December 15.*—Work; walk; alterations for 'Cythna.' *Tuesday, December 16.*—Ollier goes up. Finish 'Cythna.'"

a literary committee. He contested the proposed alterations CHAP. IV. step by step; in the end sometimes adopting, more frequently Jan. 1817- modifying, never originating, and always insisting that his Mar. 1818. poem was spoiled." What at least is certain is, that no petulant or impatient word of Shelley's remains on record. During the days of trouble about the fate of his poem, he studied Hume's "Essays," read Berkeley, and beguiled the idler hours with Shakespeare and Lady Morgan's "France;" and when in a short time the needful changes were effected, the offending leaves cancelled, and proofs of the substituted leaves revised, and "Laon and Cythna" had become "The Revolt of Islam," its author, who was zealous in calling in the copies previously issued, transferred his affections to the revised poem, and interested himself in its publication and due advertisement as eagerly as if it had been the first-begotten offspring of his brain.

A few evenings before this trouble came upon Shelley, he had received Godwin's long-expected novel, "Mandeville," and while Mary hurried through its pages, he wrote, acknowledging the arrival of the volumes, and breaking the news to Godwin, in whose money troubles he still took an active interest, that a journey to Italy was now in prospect.

*Shelley to Godwin.*

Marlow, December 1, 1817.

MY DEAR GODWIN,

"Mandeville" has arrived this evening. Mary is now reading it; and I am like a man on the brink of a precipice, or a ship whose sails are all to wind for the storm. What do you mean by saying that you shall be in a state of unusual disquiet for the next two weeks? Is it money or literary affairs? I am extremely sorry to hear that Ireson has put you off. I am to the last degree serious and earnest in the affair, and I can place no trust but in Evans. I have written to Longdill as enclosed. My health has suffered somewhat of a relapse since I saw you, attended with pulmonary symptoms. I do not found much hope on physicians; their judgments are all dissimilar, and their prescriptions alike

CHAP. IV. ineffectual. I shall, at all events, quit this damp situation as soon  
 Jan. 1817— as an opportunity offers, and I am strongly impelled to doubt  
 Mar. 1818. whether Italy might not decide in my frame the contest between  
 disease and youth in favour of life. The precariousness arising  
 out of these considerations makes me earnest that something should  
 be done, and speedily, with Evans. I shall then be free, whatever  
 I ought to do. Until then I consider myself bound to you. Adieu.

Most affectionately yours,

P. B. S.

My best respects to Mrs. Godwin. Does she think of paying us  
 a visit?

Clare bids me say that the enclosed thing is a measure, and that  
 she sends her love to her mother.

A week later "Mandeville" had been read—read in a  
 breathless excitement of delight—and in Shelley's letter to  
 Godwin appears already in its first form a portion of that  
 criticism on the novel which occupied some columns of the  
 last number of the *Examiner* for the year 1817.\* Having  
 prepared Godwin to contemplate the proposed journey of his  
 daughter and son-in-law to Italy, Shelley now enters more  
 fully into the motives of his journey to the South.

*Shelley to Godwin.*

Marlow, December 7, 1817.

MY DEAR GODWIN,

To begin with the subject of most immediate interest:  
 close with Richardson; and when I say this, what relief should I  
 not feel from a thousand distressing emotions if I could believe  
 that he was in earnest in his offer! I have not heard from Long-  
 dill, though I wish earnestly for information. My health has been  
 materially worse; my feelings at intervals are of a deadly and  
 torpid kind, or awakened to a state of such unnatural and keen  
 excitement that, only to instance the organ of sight, I find the very  
 blades of grass and the boughs of distant trees present themselves  
 to me with microscopical distinctness. Towards evening I sink  
 into a state of lethargy and inanimation, and often remain for

\* This remarkable piece of writing was printed by Medwin from an inferior  
 text; the more correct text of the *Examiner* has not been reprinted.

hours on the sofa, between sleep and waking, a prey to the most painful irritability of thought; such, with little intermission, is my condition. The hours devoted to study are selected with vigilant caution from among these periods of endurance. It is not for this that I think of travelling to Italy, even if I knew that Italy would relieve me. But I have experienced a decisive pulmonary attack; and although at present it has passed away without any very considerable vestige of its existence, yet this symptom sufficiently shows the true nature of my disease to be consumption. It is to my advantage that this malady is in its nature slow, and, if one is sufficiently alive to its advances, is susceptible of cure from a warm climate. In the event of its assuming any decided shape, it would be my *duty* to go to Italy without delay; and it is only when that measure becomes an indispensable duty that, contrary to Mary's feelings and to mine as they regard you, I shall go to Italy. I need not remind you, besides the mere pain endured by the survivors, of the train of evil consequences which my death would cause to ensue. I am thus circumstantial and explicit, because you seem to have misunderstood me. It is not health but life that I should seek in Italy; and that not for my own sake—I feel that I am capable of trampling on all such weakness—but for the sake of those to whom my life may be a source of happiness, utility, security, and honour, and to some of whom my death might be all that is the reverse.

I ought to say I cannot persevere in the meat diet. What you say of Malthus fills me, as far as my intellect is concerned, with life and strength. I believe that I have a most anxious desire that the time should quickly come that, even so far as you are personally concerned, you should be tranquil and independent. But when I consider the intellectual lustre with which you clothe this world, and how much the next generation of mankind may be benefited by that light flowing forth without the intervention of one shadow, I am elevated above all thoughts which tend to you or myself as an individual, and become by sympathy part of those distant and innumerable minds to whom your writings must be present.

I meant to have written to you about "Mandeville" solely, but I was so irritable and weak that I could not write, although I had much to say. I have read "Mandeville," but I must read it again

CHAP. IV.

Jan. 1817—  
Mar. 1818.

CHAP. IV. soon, for the interest is of that irresistible and overwhelming kind that the mind in its influence is like a cloud borne on by an impetuous wind, like one breathlessly carried forward who has no time to pause or observe the causes of his career. I think the power of "Mandeville" is inferior to nothing you have done, and were it not for the character of Falkland,\* no instance in which you have exerted that power of *creation*, which you possess beyond all contemporary writers, might compare with it. Falkland is still alone; power is in Falkland, not as in "Mandeville," tumult hurried on by the tempest, but tranquility standing unshaken amid its fiercest rage. But "Caleb Williams" never shakes the deepest soul like "Mandeville." It must be said of the latter you rule with a rod of iron. The picture is never bright, and we wonder whence you drew the darkness with which its shades are deepened, until the epithet of tenfold might almost cease to be a metaphor. The noun *smorfia* touches some chord within us with such a cold and jarring power that I started, and could scarce believe but that I was Mandeville, and that his hideous grin was stamped upon my own face.† In style and strength of expression "Mandeville" is wonderfully great, and the energy and the sweetness of the sentiments scarcely to be equalled. Clifford's character, as mere beauty, is a divine and soothing contrast, and I do not think, if perhaps I except (and I know not if I ought to do so) the speech of Agathon in the "Symposium" of Plato, that there ever was produced a moral discourse more characteristic of all that is admirable and lovely in human nature, more lovely and admirable in itself, than that of Henrietta to Mandeville as he is recovering from madness. Shall I say that when I discovered that she was pleading all this time sweetly for her lover, and when at last she weakly abandoned poor Mandeville, I felt an involuntary and perhaps an unreasonable pang? Adieu!

Always most affectionately yours,

P. S.

\* In "Caleb Williams."

† This, which is reproduced in the criticism in the *Examiner*, refers to the closing pages of "Mandeville," the hero of which receives a gash across the face—a wound of the sort which in the French civil war was called *une balafre*. "*Balafre*" I find explained by Girolamo Vittori by the Italian word *smorfiato*; and this again—I mean the noun *smorfia*—is decided by 'the resolute' John Florio to signify 'a blurring or mumping, a mocking or push with one's mouth'" ("Mandeville," iii. p. 365).

On the same day on which Shelley addressed his letter of CHAP. IV. remonstrance to Ollier on the subject of the suppression of Jan. 1817-  
Mar. 1818. "Laon and Cythna," he again wrote to Godwin. It was a cause of regret with him that Godwin did not regard his poetical work with admiration akin to that which he himself felt for "Mandeville." Some of the feeling with regard to his poem, which he held under restraint while writing to his publisher, finds expression in this letter to his father-in-law. \*

*Shelley to Godwin.*

Marlow, December 11, 1817.

MY DEAR GODWIN,

If I had believed it possible you should send any part of my letter to the *Chronicle* I should have expressed more fully my sentiments of "Mandeville" and of the author; as it is, I cannot but be glad that you should think any opinion of mine relating to your book worthy of being presented to the public. The effect of your favourable consideration of my powers, as they relate to the judgment of the degree and kind of approbation due to the intellectual executions of others, has emboldened me to write, not a volume, but a more copious statement of my feelings as they were excited by "Mandeville." This I have sent to the *Examiner*. If Hunt does not insert it, I will send it to you for your own reading, though it was so written as to be more interesting to the public than to yourself.

I have read and considered all that you say about my general powers, and the particular instance of the poem in which I have attempted to develop them. Nothing can be more satisfactory to me than the interest which your admonitions express; but I think you are mistaken in some points in regard to the peculiar nature of my powers, whatever be their amount. I listened with deference and self-suspicion to your censures of "Laon and Cythna," but the productions of mine which you commend hold a very low place in my own esteem, and this reassured me in some degree at least.

\* Part of this letter was printed by Mrs. Shelley in her note to "The Revolt of Islam."



CHAP. IV. The poem was produced by a series of thoughts which filled my mind with unbounded and sustained enthusiasm. I felt the precariousness of my life, and I resolved in this book to leave some records of myself. Much of what the volume contains was written with the same feeling—as real though not so prophetic—as the communications of a dying man. I never presumed indeed to consider it anything approaching to faultless, but when I considered contemporary productions of the same apparent pretensions, I will own that I was filled with confidence. I felt that it was in many respects a genuine picture of my own mind. I felt that the sentiments were true, not assumed. And in this have I long believed that my power consists—in sympathy, and that part of the imagination which relates to sympathy and contemplation. I am formed, if for anything not in common with the herd of mankind, to apprehend minute and remote distinctions of feeling, whether relative to external nature or the living beings which surround us, and to communicate the conceptions which result from considering either the moral or the material universe as a whole. Of course I believe these faculties, which perhaps comprehend all that is sublime in man, to exist very imperfectly in my own mind. But when you advert to my Chancery paper (a cold, forced, unimpassioned insignificant piece of cramped and cautious argument) and to the little scrap about “Mandeville,” which expressed my feelings indeed, but cost scarcely two minutes’ thought to express, as specimens of my powers more favourable than that which grew, as it were, from the “agony and bloody sweat” of intellectual travail, surely I must feel that in some manner either I am mistaken in believing that I have any talent at all, or you in the selection of the specimens of it. Yet, after all, I cannot but be conscious, in much of what I write, of an absence of that tranquility which is the attribute and accompaniment of power. This feeling alone would make your most kind and wise admonitions on the subject of the economy of intellectual force valuable to me; and if I live, or if I see any trust in coming years, doubt not that I shall do something, whatever it may be, which a serious and earnest estimate of my powers will suggest to me, and which will be in every respect accommodated to their utmost limits.

This dry and frosty weather fills me with health and spirits; I wish I could believe that it would last. Shall we now see you soon? Why could you not for a day or two at least leave town?

Mrs. Godwin, too; how is she? and does she not mean to take CHAP. IV.  
embargo off her own person? \*

Jan. 1817-  
Mar. 1818.

Mary unites with me in best love.

My dear Godwin,

Most affectionately yours,

P. B. S.

The year 1817 closed with visits from Godwin and Horace Smith. In Horace Smith a friend was found by Shelley precisely of the kind most serviceable to him; one who sympathized ardently with his high hopes and aspirations; one who felt the splendour of his genius and the beauty of his moral nature; one, also, who possessed robust good sense, abundant humour, and varied knowledge of mankind; one, therefore, who could aid him by a generous worldly wisdom, while encouraging him to despise the injustice of the world and to give his youth

“To glorious hopes and all-defying truth.” †

It was a grief to Shelley that another friend, whom he valued more, perhaps, for Mary's sake than his own, should have allowed untoward influences to alienate his heart from the household at Marlow. William Baxter, of Dundee, had long been an ardent admirer and a friend of Godwin. In his house Mary Godwin had spent some of the happiest months of her girlhood, where in Baxter's daughters, Christy and Isabel, she had found close and dear companions. Mr. Baxter was a man of liberal principles, and had been expelled, as an unworthy member, from the strait sect of the Glassites, which his forefathers at Dundee had helped to establish. During the month of September he had been Shelley's guest at Marlow, and had written to his daughter, Isabel Booth, encouraging her

\* Shelley's courtesy perhaps exceeded his sincerity. “He used to say when he was obliged to dine with Mrs. Godwin he would ‘lean back in his chair and languish into hate.’” Quoted from Field's “Biographical Notes” in the *Athenæum*, April 8, 1882.

† The last line of H. Smith's sonnet “To the Author of ‘The Revolt of Islam,’” printed in the *Examiner*, February 8, 1818.

CHAP. IV. to renew relations with her former friend, from whom she had  
Jan. 1817-  
Mar. 1818. drawn away since Mary's flight to the Continent in 1814.  
"As to Shelley," wrote Mr. Baxter (October 3, 1817), "I confess to you I was very much deceived in the preconceived estimate I had formed of him, and very agreeably disappointed in the man I found him to be. I had somehow or other imagined him to be an ignorant, silly, half-witted enthusiast, with intellect scarcely sufficient to keep him out of a mad-house, and morals that fitted him only for a brothel. How much, then, was I surprised and delighted to find him a being of rare genius and talent, of truly republican frugality and plainness of manners, and of a soundness of principle and delicacy of moral tact that might put to shame (if shame they had) many of his detractors; and, with all this, so amiable that you have only to be half an hour in his company to convince you that there is not an atom of malevolence in his whole composition! Is there any wonder that I should become attached to such a man, holding out the hand of kindness and friendship towards me? Certainly not." Encouraged by her father to take Mary Shelley again to her heart, Isabel Booth had allowed the old affection to assert itself, and when Mary invited her to be one of the party journeying to Italy, she would gladly have given her consent. Baxter, like other members of the Glassite sect, had married in early youth, and his son-in-law, David Booth, now over fifty years of age, was more than seven years his senior. Booth, a self-educated man of vigorous intellect, imperious will, and disposition imperiously kind, was a remarkable figure at Newburgh, in Fifeshire. Not five feet high, very dark of hue, with eyes red and watery, and something of the imp, if not the fiend, in his look, the brewer, afterwards the schoolmaster, of Newburgh was recognized in his district as a person of stupendous learning and mysterious power. "The little apostle" was in principles a republican; it was whispered that he had sold himself to the devil for learning; in proof of which might it not be plainly seen that he cast no

shadow in the sunshine? How Isabel Baxter came to give CHAP. IV. her heart and hand to the middle-aged schoolmaster we can Jan. 1817-  
Mar. 1818. but conjecture. Doubtless there was a power of attraction in his force of character, his strength of intellect, his tyrannous kindness, and his awful repute for learning. Booth's "Introduction to an Analytical Dictionary of the English Language" was hardly a book for a wooer and his beloved to lean over tenderly, but it had raised him to a certain rank in the world of letters; and when later he came to London, he gave proof of his intellectual prowess in a series of vigorous writings on themes as wide apart as the doctrines of Malthus and the Art of Brewing. Of friendship with the Shelleys David Booth could not and would not hear. Was not the house at Marlow a community of lawless lovers, and should his wife become a member of that community? All day-dreams of visiting Italy in company with her friend she must instantly resign; and his deluded father-in-law must be induced to take the manly course of breaking off relations, once and for all, with his late host. Baxter, overawed by his son-in-law, the senior and the stronger man, cast about to find an excuse for the inevitable rupture. He might allege that he was socially inferior to Shelley; he a manufacturer of canvas for the navy, Shelley a prospective baronet. He might add that Shelley's freedom of thought and action, totally inconsistent with the customs, manners, and prejudices of European society, in which the Baxter family had been educated, rendered it advisable for his children's sake that intimacy between them should cease, or should not be renewed. To this effect Mr. Baxter wrote on December 29, 1817. With singular charm of frankness, sweetness of temper, and dignity, Shelley on the following day replied.

*Shelley to Mr. William Baxter.*

Marlow, December 30, 1817.

MY DEAR SIR,

Your candid explanation is very welcome to me, as it relieves me from a weight of uncertainty, and is consistent with

CHAP. IV. my own mode of treating those who honour me with their friendship—which is, either to maintain with them a free and unsuspicious intercourse, or explicitly to state to them my motives for interrupting or circumscribing it, so soon as they arise within my own mind.

Jan. 1817—  
Mar. 1818.

I understand by your letter that you decline, in the name of your family, an intercourse which I believe had its sole foundation in the intimacy of Isabel and Mary. This intercourse entirely originated in an unsolicited advance on their part; \* a change in their opinions and feelings produced it then, and now concludes it. Mary renewed with pleasure the friendship of her early years. I considered her friends as mine, and found much satisfaction, distinct from that duty, in discovering in you, the first of the new circle to whom I was introduced, a man of virtue and talent with whose feelings and opinions I perpetually found occasions of sympathy. To me, a secluded valetudinarian, all this was quite an event. Mary for three whole years had been lamenting the loss of her friend, and was made miserable and indignant that her friendship had been sacrificed to opinions which she supposed had already received their condemnation in the mind of every enlightened reasoner on moral science. Young and ardent spirits confound theory and practice. I saw that all this was in the natural order of things, and it is neither my habit to feel indignation or disappointment at the inconsistencies of mankind. People who had one atom of pride or resentment for injury or neglect would have refused the renewal of an intimacy which had already been once dissolved on a plea, in their conception, to the last degree unworthy and erroneous.

I thus see your determination to deprive Mary of the intercourse of her friend, and most highly respect the motives, as I know they must exist in your mind, for this proceeding. May I ask *precisely what* those motives are? You do not distinctly say, but only allude to certain free opinions which I hold, inconsistent with yours. We had a good deal of discussion about all sorts of opinions, and I thought we agreed on all—except matters of taste; and I don't think any serious consequences ought to flow from a controversy whether Wordsworth or Campbell be the greater poet. Yet I would not be misapprehended. Though I have not a spark

\* Consequent on Godwin's informing Mr. Baxter in May of the fact of Shelley's marriage, celebrated in December, 1816.

of pride or resentment in this matter, I disdain to say a word CHAP. IV.  
 that should tend to *persuade* you to change your decision. On any Jan. 1817-  
 such change you know where to find a man constant and sincere Mar. 1818.  
 in his predilections. But all I now want is to know the plain  
 truth.

Mr. Booth is no doubt a man of great intellectual acuteness and consummate skill in the exercise of logic.\* I never met with a man by whom, in the short time we exchanged ideas, I felt myself excited to so much severe and sustained mental competition, or from whom I derived so much amusement and instruction. It would have given me much pleasure to have cultivated his acquaintance. But I know that this desire could not be reciprocal. Nor is it difficult to apprehend the cause of this distinction. Am I not right in my conjecture in attributing to Mr. Booth the change in your sentiment announced in your letter? His keen and subtle mind, deficient in those elementary feelings which are the *principles* of all moral reasoning, is better fitted for the detection of error than the establishment of truth, and his pleadings, urged or withdrawn with sceptical caution and indifference, may be employed with almost equal force as an instrument of fair argument or sophistry. In matters of abstract speculation we can readily recur to the first principles on which our opinions rest, and thus confute a sophism or derive instruction from an argument. But in the complicated relations of private life, it is a practice difficult, dangerous, and rare to appeal to an elementary principle; the motives of the sophist are many and secret; the resources of his ingenuity as numerous as the relations respecting which it is exercised. Mr. Booth's reasonings *may* be right; they *may* be sincere; he *may* be conscientiously impressed with views widely differing from mine. But be frank with me, my dear sir; is it not Mr. Booth who has persuaded you to see things in this way since your last visit, when no such considerations as you allege in your letter were present to your thoughts? The only motive that suggests this question is an unwillingness to submit to the having my intimacies made the sport of secret and unacknowledged manœuvres.

I need not say that your expressions of kindness and service are flattering to me, and that I can say with great truth that I should consider myself honoured if at any time it were possible

\* Shelley and his wife had received Mr. Booth, with Mr. Baxter, to tea on November 13, during their stay in London.

CHAP. IV. that you would make the limited power which I possess a source of utility to you.  
 Jan. 1817—  
 Mar. 1818.

My dear Sir,

Yours most sincerely,

P. B. SHELLEY.

[*P.S.—added by Mary Shelley.*]

MY DEAR SIR,

You see I prophesied well three months ago, when you were here. I then said that I was sure that Mr. Booth was averse to our intercourse, and would find some means to break it off. I wish I had you by the fire here in my little study, and it might be “double, double, toil and trouble,” but I could quickly convince you that your girls are not below me in station, and that in fact I am the fittest companion for them in the world; but I postpone the argument until I see you, for I know (pardon me) that *viva voce* is all in all with you.\*

Before leaving England for Italy Shelley had an interview with Mr. Baxter (March 2), and parted from him, we may well believe, in no unkindly spirit. Isabel Booth was also in town, but, in dutiful obedience to her husband, neither called nor in any way communicated with Mary Shelley. “In a few days we quit England for a long journey,” Mary had written to Mr. Baxter, on February 3. “At such a time I could wish that all who have been our friends would be so still, but this is useless.” The letter closed with “the most heartfelt wishes” of the writer for her friend’s “happiness and welfare.”

The last month at Marlow—January, 1818—was troubled for Shelley by serious indisposition, and when his illness

\* Mr. Baxter showed Shelley’s letter to his son-in-law, who immediately wrote to Shelley in vigorous terms. “You have amused yourself,” he says, “in sketching the characters of Mr. Baxter and me. They are composition pictures, and as a pair of portraits form together a ludicrous, mystical Duality, combining the abstract principles of good and of evil—of Divinity and of Demon.” In concluding his letter he writes, “I have only to add that Mr. Baxter’s (to which yours now before me is an answer) was written and sent off without having been shown to me. I certainly should not have suggested any expressions which could have called forth remarks about rank or station. In these I never would acknowledge inferiority, and at all events they have nothing to do with the present question.”

passed away, this was followed by a renewal of the attack CHAP. IV. of ophthalmia from which he had suffered somewhat earlier. Jan. 1817-Mar. 1818. Yet he busied himself with a translation of the Hymns of Homer, to which at a later date he returned; he was eager to examine Chapman's rendering of the same pieces; and in the publication of his "Revolt of Islam," now after such unforeseen delays accomplished, he took no slight interest. "Don't relax in the advertising," he wrote to Ollier on January 22. "I suppose at present that it scarcely sells at all. If you see any review or notices of it in any periodical paper, pray send it to me; it is part of my reward—the amusement of hearing the abuse of the bigots." Abundant reward of this kind was in store for Shelley during future days. In preparation for the coming journey, Claire was already studying Italian; Peacock appears presently in her journal under the new name of "Il Pavone." Mary, with her steadfastness and fidelity of nature, still worked at Latin, now making progress with Tacitus or Virgil. "Read sixth book of Virgil to Shelley," she enters in her diary for January 24; "read Clarke; walk out and see a lovely rainbow"—a touching entry with its reserve and its secret significance, for January 24 was the second anniversary of little William's birthday, and to Mary's heart the rainbow was a happy omen for his future. Alas! a truer omen might have been found in those pathetic lines which lead towards its close the book of Virgil which the father and mother read together on that day.\*

Before removing to a distance from England, Shelley desired to place his wife's father—as far as his power permitted—beyond the reach of distress. Unhappily his power was not commensurate with his goodwill. What he could he gave; but Godwin's necessities were always gaping and hungry-throated. It must have put Shelley's benevolence to a sore test to find that his gifts called forth reproach

\* We learn from Miss Clairmont's journal that on the following day, January 25, the house at Marlow was sold, whereat there was "great rejoicing."



CHAP. IV. and petulance, ill disguised under the sounding phrases of  
 Jan. 1817- philosophy.  
 Mar. 1818.

*Godwin to Shelley.*

January 31, 1818.

I acknowledge the receipt of the sum mentioned in your letter.

I acknowledge with equal explicitness my complete disappointment.

I observe the expression you use that you are "resolved to keep in your own hands the power conferred by the difference of the two sums." If your meaning in this is frank and direct, there is an easy resource, often practised among men of business. Let the difference between the sum I have now received and the sum you taught me to expect be placed in the hands of a banker, not to be drawn out but under the joint signatures of "P. B. Shelley and Wm. Godwin." Otherwise I have no right to believe that "the power is kept in your hands."

Now to the main point. I will never again discuss with you any question of this sort upon paper; but I do not desire the presence of any third person.

Since our last conversation at Marlow I have reflected much on the subject. I am ashamed of the tone I have taken in all our late conversations. I have played the part of a suppliant, and deserted that of a philosopher. It was not thus I talked with you when I first knew you. I will talk so no more. I will talk principles; I will talk Political Justice; whether it makes for me or against me, no matter. I am fully capable of this. I desire not to dictate. I know that every man's conduct ought to be regulated by his own judgment, such as it may happen to be. But I hold it to be my duty once to state to you the principles which belong to the case. Having done that, it is my duty to forbear. I would enlighten your understanding if I could; but I would not, if I could, carry things by importunity. I have nothing to say to you of a passionate nature; least of all do I wish to move your feelings; less than the least to wound you. All that I have to say is in the calmness of philosophy, and moves far above the atmosphere of vulgar sensations. If you have the courage to hear me, come; if you have not, be it so. What I have to say, I *must* say, if I ever stand in your presence again; but I had rather it were without a witness.

The journal for some of the days of February and March

will tell of the farewell to Marlow—Mary on the 10th of the former month following Shelley, who had left for London on the 7th, and Claire, who had taken Willy and Allegra to town two days later.\* It will tell also of the pleasantly filled weeks that went by in the interval before the departure for the Continent. Although at Marlow Shelley had suffered much ill health, caused in part, as he believed, by the cold and damp of his house, he could not quit without some regret a place surrounded with beauty, and now associated for him with the delight of imaginative creation. "My thoughts for ever cling to Windsor Forest and the copses of Marlow," he wrote six months later from the Baths of Lucca, "like the clouds that hang upon the woods of the mountains, low trailing, and though they pass away, leave their best dew where they themselves have faded."† But these days in London

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Jan. 817-  
Mar. 818.

\* Before leaving Marlow Shelley obtained from William Willats, of Fore Street, Cripplegate, the sum of £2000 in consideration for £4500, to be paid on his father's death. When it was that he called on Rogers (as recorded in Rogers's "Table-Talk") to request a loan for Leigh Hunt, I cannot tell. Shelley offered a bond, but Rogers had to refuse the loan. "Both in appearance and in manners," he said, "Shelley was the perfect gentleman."

† Albion House, Marlow, is dignified with the following inscription upon a square stone placed upon the parapet:—

This Tablet was placed A.D. 1867  
at the instance of  
Sir William Robert Clayton, Bart.,  
to perpetuate the record that  
Percy Bysshe Shelley  
lived and wrote in this house,  
and was here visited by  
Lord Byron.

"He is gone where all things wise and fair  
Descend! Oh! dream not that the amorous deep  
Will yet restore him to the vital air;  
Death feeds on his mute voice, and laughs at our despair."

("Adonais.")

Byron never visited Shelley at Marlow; but in Shelley's time a story got abroad that he expected this distinguished guest, and had prepared a room for him draped in black. "Before going to Marlow," Mr. Booth wrote to his wife, January 9, 1818, "he ordered his upholsterer, who prepared the house for his reception, to notify officially to all the inhabitants that the coming family would associate with no one in the village, would never go to church, and would [do] as

## CHAP. IV

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Mar. 1818.

were not consumed in regretful retrospection. Encouraged by the publication of his remarks on "Mandeville" in the *Examiner*, Shelley now wrote a review—enthusiastic and eloquent—of his friend Peacock's new poem "Rhododaphne." Himself about to visit classic ground, the verses of Peacock seemed to lead him on, like "a voice heard from some Pythian cavern in the solitudes where Delphi stood." "We are transported," he writes, "to the banks of Peneus, and linger under the crags of Tempe, and see the water-lilies floating on the stream. We are with Plato by old Ilissus, under the sacred Plane-tree among the sweet scent of flowering willows; and above there is the nightingale of Sophocles in the ivy of the pine, who is watching the sunset so that it may dare to sing." The transcript of this review, in Mary's handwriting, Shelley gave or sent to Leigh Hunt, probably for insertion in the *Examiner*, where, however, it did not find a place. In Hunt's society, and that of Horace Smith, Keats, Novello; in visits to the Italian Opera, where Mdle. Milanie led the ballet; in visits to Covent Garden, where Miss O'Neill played the part of Bianca in Milman's "Fazio," the evenings went brightly past. "We look up to your box," wrote Hunt more than a year later, recalling these evenings, "almost hoping to see a thin, patrician-looking cosmopolite yearning out upon us, and a sedate-faced young lady bending in a similar direction, with her great tablet of a forehead, and her white shoulders unconscious of a crimson gown." Day after day Hogg and Peacock came to dine at the lodgings, No. 119, Great Russell Street. To fill the vacant hours there were sundry preparations for departure. It was doubtless Mary Shelley's wish that her children, before the flight for foreign lands, should

they chose in defiance of public opinion. A room was hung with black for the reception of Lord Byron, but I have never heard that his lordship ever took possession of it."

I am indebted for some information about Shelley at Great Marlow to Mr. R. S. Downs, of High Wycombe, who contributed two articles on this subject to a local journal.

receive their names in the orderly English fashion, and be able, in case of need, to refer to the registry of their baptism. Accordingly, on March 9, at the parish church of St. Giles-in-the-Fields, William Shelley and Clara Everina Shelley were duly christened. On the same occasion little Alba received her baptismal names of Clara Allegra. In the register of baptisms her parents are named: "Right Hon. George Gordon Lord Byron, the reputed father, by Clara Mary Jane Clairmont." \* CHAP. IV.  
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Mar. 1818.

*Mary's Journal.*†

"*Friday, February 6* [Marlow].—Pack the books; play at chess with Shelley.

"*Saturday, February 7*.—Shelley goes up to London. Pack; read 'Henry Monteagle,' 'Giaour,' 'Corsair,' 'Lara;' and pack up till Tuesday, 10th, when we leave Marlow; and go to the Opera in the evening—'Don Giovanni.'

"*Wednesday, February 11*.—Look for lodgings; spend the evening at Hunt's [Peacock, Hogg, and Keats were present].

"*Thursday, February 12*.—Go to the Indian Library and Panorama of Rome. On Friday, 13th, spend the morning at the British Museum, looking at the Elgin Marbles. On Saturday, 14th, go to Hunt's. Clara and Shelley [with Peacock and Hogg] go to the Opera. On Sunday, 15th, Mr. Bramsen, Peacock, and Hogg dine with us.

"*Monday, February 16*.—Go to the play with Peacock [tragedy of 'Fazio' and pantomime of 'Harlequin Gulliver'].

"*Tuesday, February 17*.—In the morning go and see the casts from Phidias. Hogg spends the evening here.

"*Wednesday, February 18*.—Spend the day at Hunt's. On Thursday, 19th, dine at Horace Smith's and copy Shelley's Eclogue.‡ On Friday, 20th, copy Shelley's critique on 'Rhododaphne.' Go to the Apollonicon with Shelley. On Saturday,

\* The officiating clergyman was the Rev. Charles M'Carthy.

† The insertions in brackets note facts recorded in Claire's diary.

‡ "Rosalind and Helen."

CHAP. IV. 21st, copy Shelley's critique, and go to the play in the evening  
 Jan. 1817— 'The Bride of Abydos.' On Tuesday go to the Opera —  
 Mar. 1818. 'Figaro.' On Wednesday Hunt dines with us. Shelley is not well.

"*Sunday, March 1.*—Read Montaigne. Spend the evening at Hunt's. On Monday, 2nd, Shelley calls on Mr. Baxter. Isabel Booth is arrived, but neither comes nor sends. Go to the play in the evening with Hunt, and see a new comedy damned.\* On Thursday, 5th, Papa calls, and Claire visits Mrs. Godwin. On Sunday, 8th, we dine at Hunt's and meet Mr. Novello. Music.

"*Monday, March 9.*—Christening the children. Horace Smith calls; he spends the evening here with Godwin and Peacock. After they are all gone Hunt comes, with Miss Kent;† they go at 12.

"*Tuesday, March 10.*—Packing. Hunt and Marianne‡ spend the day with us. Mary Lamb calls. Papa in the evening; our adieus.

#### LIST OF BOOKS READ IN 1817.

##### MARY.

(Those marked \* Shelley has read also.)

2 vols. of Lord Chesterfield's Letters.	Round Table, by W. Hazlitt.
*Coleridge's Lay Sermon.	Cupid's Revenge. } Beaumont and
Memoirs of Count Grammont.	Martial Maid [?]. } Fletcher.
Somnium Scipionis.	Wild Goose Chase. }
Roderick Random.	*Tales of My Landlord.
Comus.	Rambler.
Knights of the Swan.	*Waverley.
Cumberland's Memoirs.	Amadis de Gaul.
Junius's Letters.	Epistolæ Plinii Secundi.
Journey to the World Underground.	*Story of Psyche in Apuleius.
Duke of Buckingham's Rehearsal, and the Restoration.	Anna St. Ives.
Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia, by Sir P. Sidney.	Vita Julii Cæsarii: Suetonius.
	*Defoe on the Plague.
	*Wilson's City of the Plague.

\* I learn from the *Courier* of March 3 that this comedy was "The Castle of Glympower," given at Drury Lane. "In point of pure stupidity," says the critic, "it leaves all other bad plays at an immeasurable distance."

† Hunt's sister-in-law.

‡ Mrs. Hunt.

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Miss Edgeworth's Comic Dramas.  
Fortitude and Frailty, by Holcroft.  
3rd canto of Childe Harold.  
Quarterly Review.  
\*Lalla Rookh, by T. Moore.  
\*Davis's Travels in America.  
\*Godwin's Miscellanies.  
\*Spenser's Fairy Queen.  
\*Manuscrit venu de St. Hélène.  
Buffon's Théorie de la Terre.  
Beaumont and Fletcher's Plays.  
\*Volpone, Cynthia's Revels, The Alchemist, Fall of Sejanus, Catiline's Conspiracy.  
La Nouvelle Héloïse.  
Lettres Persanes.  
Miss Edgeworth's Harrington and Ormond.  
Arthur Mervyn.  
\*Antony and Cleopatra. Othello.  
The Missionary. Rhoda.  
Wild Irish Girl.  
Glenarvon.  
The Anaconda.  
Pastor's Fireside.  
Amelia.  
Sir Launcelot Greaves.  
Strathallan.  
Twopenny Postbag.  
Anti-Jacobin Poetry.  
Miseries of Human Life.  
\*Moore's Odes and Epistles.

Les Lettres d'une Peruvienne.  
Confessions et Lettres de Rousseau.  
\*Lamb's Specimens.  
Molière's George Dandin.  
Le Testament.  
Family of Montorio.  
Querelles de Famille.  
German Theatre.  
Eugenie and Mathilde.  
\*Mandeville.  
\*Laon and Cythna.  
\*Lady Morgan's France.  
The Three Brothers.  
1st vol. of Hume's Essays.  
Annalium C. Cornelii Taciti.

## SHELLEY.

Symposium of Plato.	} Greek.
Plays of Æschylus.	
Plays of Sophocles.	
Iliad of Homer.	
Arrian's Historia Indica.	
Homer's Hymns.	
Histoire de la Révolution française.	
Apuleius.	
Metamorphoses (Latin).	
Coleridge's Biographia Literaria.	
Political Justice.	
Rights of Man.	
Elphinstone's Embassy to Cabul.	
Several vols. of Gibbon.	

## CHAPTER V.

## EARLY DAYS IN ITALY.

CHAP. V. ON the evening of March 10, while Hunt and his wife were at the lodgings in Great Russell Street, Shelley fell into one of his deep slumbers. It was decided that he should not be aroused. Defrauded of Hunt's farewell grasp of the hand and of Marianne's kiss, Shelley awoke to find his friends departed. Early next day the travellers were on the road to Dover.\*

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On Wednesday, March 11, 1818, and on the morning of the following day, Shelley looked for the last time on English fields and English skies. The diaries of Mrs. Shelley and of Miss Clairmont tell us some of the incidents of travel.

*Claire Clairmont's Journal.*

" *Wednesday, March 11.*—Set out for Dover. Breakfast at Dartford. Chatham, Ospringe, Canterbury, and Dover. I admire the entrance to Dover. We come at night, and it looks almost like a fairy city from the multitude of lights that are sprinkled here and there over the hills. We stay at York House.

" *Thursday, March 12.*—Walk upon the beach. Bathe my darling.† Discussion whether we shall go. Major and Mrs.

\* Peacock, who had been to the opera ("Il Barbiere," performed for the first time in England, with Garcia as Count Almaviva), came also to Shelley's lodgings and supped there. On that night he saw Shelley for the last time.

† This and many other references to Allegra are cancelled by Miss Clairmont, yet are sometimes legible.

Hare. We do go in the *Lady Castlereagh* with Major and Mrs. CHAP. V.  
 Hare and some other ladies. The time is very stormy; the Mar.-Nov.  
 waves mountains high. But the wind was favourable, and 1818.  
 blew us in two hours and forty minutes into Calais. Mrs.  
 Hare was much frightened, and repeated the Lord's Prayer in  
 her distress every now and then, requesting her servant to go  
 on with it, as she was prevented by sickness. Nothing can be  
 more delightful than Calais; the people are so agreeable, and  
 the town so airy and agreeable. We stay au Grand Cerf."

*Mary Shelley's Journal.*

"*Friday, March 13.*—Spend the morning in preparations, and then quit Calais. The country is uninteresting, but the weather is delightful, and after the sun has set the horned moon, Orion, and his brethren lend us their light.\* The gates of St. Omer are shut, and a woman from the other side the moat shrieks out a demand of who the invaders are. She carries the reply to the Commander, and returns in about half an hour, heading a party of about a dozen soldiers, and, upon a promise of *remembering the guard*, lets us through three tremendous gates, when we arrive at a magnificent hotel and rest for the night.

"*Saturday, March 14.*—We pass through a dismal country with very disagreeable postilions, and sleep at Douay.

"*Sunday, March 15.*—Sleep at La Fère ['a miserable town,' writes Miss Clairmont].

"*Monday, March 16.*—Shelley reads Schlegel aloud to us. We sleep at Rheims on Tuesday, 17th, after a hard day's journey ['through such roads,' says Miss Clairmont, 'by Berry le Bac, that every instant the carriage was in danger of being overturned']. We sleep at St. Dizier on Wednesday, 18th. We arrive at more pleasant country; hills covered with vines, while the road winds with the river Marne through the valley.

\* They were proceeding by a different route from that taken in 1814 and 1816. At Calais, we learn from Miss Clairmont's journal, they bought a carriage.



CHAP. V. We sleep at Langres on Thursday, 19th. We set out late.  
 Mar.-Nov. 1818. Shelley reads Schlegel aloud; and we travel on in a pleasant country, among nice people. We sleep at Dijon. On Saturday, 21st, we are detained three hours at Macon by the breaking of a spring of the calèche. Shelley reads Schlegel aloud. We arrive at Lyons at half-past eleven."

Besides Schlegel, Shelley had brought with him Leigh Hunt's new volume of poetry, "Foliage," and, though sensitive to the error of Hunt's occasional affectations of diction, he had found much to delight him in the opening poem, telling of the nymphs of wood and lake and mountain, of stream and sea and cloud.\* His health and spirits, which in London had been feeble and depressed, improved as he and his companions journeyed towards the spring, which was hastening to meet them from the south. "Though our weather was at first abominable," he wrote to Hunt from Lyons (March 22), "we have now warm sunny days, and soft winds, and a sky of deep azure, the most serene I ever saw." Light in its plenitude, heat as of the solstice, the affluence of nature were never in excess for Shelley's enjoyment or his health.

*Mary Shelley's Journal.*

"*Sunday, March 22* [Lyons].—A fine pleasant day. We agree with a voiturier to take us to Milan; and then walk out by the side of the river until its confluence with the Saône. We can see from here Jura and Mont Blanc, and the whole scene reminds us of Geneva. After dinner our voiturier comes, and we have a long conversation with him about the state of Lyons, and past events in it. He was here in the revolutionary times. After this we ride out by the river-side, and see the moon rise, broad and red, and behind the Alps. Shelley writes to Lord Byron.

\* This poem, with its Oreads, Napeads, Limniads, Nepheliads, probably suggested to Shelley the word "Poliad," a city nymph, which, appearing in a letter to Peacock of August 16, 1818, has puzzled some readers.

"*Monday, March 23.*—Walk out in the morning. After CHAP. V.  
 dinner we ride to the Isle de Barbe, where there is a fête. In Mar.—Nov.  
 the evening we go to the Comédie, which is very amusing. 1818.  
 Tuesday, a rainy day; pack. On Wednesday, 25th, we set out  
 from Lyons, and advance towards the mountains, whose white  
 tops are seen at a distance. We sleep at Tour du Pin."

The record of the next day's journey, the passage of Les Échelles to Chambéry, was made in Mary's journal by Shelley. As the travellers entered the valleys of the Alps, with their verdure and cultivation, their scattered cottages and white châteaux, Shelley clad them in fancy with their midsummer or autumn loveliness, when the great walnut-trees would have spread their leaves abroad, and the vines—some of venerable age and gray with moss—would form rows of interlaced bowers, "the red grapes hanging amid those hoary branches." At Pont Beauvoisin, the last village in France, where a bridge across the Guiers Vif led to Sardinian territory, they were delayed, the carriage standing in the middle of the bridge, between French soldiers at one end and Piedmontese at the other, for nearly an hour, while questions of passports and *impôts* were debated. Shelley's store of books had not shocked the orthodoxy of France; but his majesty of Sardinia's priestly censor had a high conception of his duty, and would admit no works of Voltaire or Rousseau into his sovereign's dominions. Fortunately a canon who had met Sir Timothy Shelley at the Catholic Duke of Norfolk's house, happened to be present, and came to the rescue of Sir Timothy's distressed son. The books were allowed to pass, but must be submitted at Chambéry to the censor's eye. Winding along the road cut through impending rocks of immense height, the carriage climbed the steeps beyond Les Échelles. "The scene," Shelley wrote, "is like that described in the 'Prometheus' of Æschylus. Vast rifts and caverns in the granite precipices, wintry mountains with ice

CHAP. V. and snow above; the loud sounds of unseen waters within the caverns, and walls of toppling rocks, only to be scaled, as he describes, by the winged chariot of the Ocean Nymphs." Perhaps it was this scene which returned to Shelley in mental vision when he described his own martyred Prometheus among the icy crags of the Indian Caucasus—

"Nailed to this wall of eagle-baffling mountain,  
Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured."

The contrast between the grandeur of the landscape, and the wasting misery of the inhabitants of some of the mountain valleys, did not fail to impress itself upon him. "One old man, lame and blind, crawled out of a hole in the rock, wet with the perpetual melting of the snows above, and dripping like a shower-bath."

A little after nightfall they reached Chambéry. It rained next day, and we do not know whether the travellers found it possible to honour the memory of Rousseau by a visit to Les Charmettes. Perhaps it was to indulge the nurse Elise that they remained all day at their inn; for news had reached her family that she was on her way to Italy, and her mother came, bringing the little granddaughter, Elise's child, to see her as she passed.\*

### *Mary Shelley's Journal.*

"*Saturday, March 28.*—Approach the highest Alps; we see the sun rise on them; and as we advance we are enclosed by them. We follow the windings of a river, and find the scenery exceedingly beautiful. It will be much finer in summer, when the leaves are out. [They slept this night at St. Jean Maurienne.]

"*Sunday, March 29.*—We advance higher among the mountains, and the snows encroach upon the road. The

\* Beside Elise, whom Miss Clairmont describes as "a very superior Swiss woman of about thirty, a mother herself," Mrs. Shelley had taken with her a Marlow girl named Milly, who remained in her service until December, 1819.

scene is far more desolate, and there is something dreadful CHAP. V.  
 in going on the edge of an overhanging precipice. We cross Mar.-Nov.  
 an Alpine bridge [Pont du Diable] thrown across a chasm. 1818.  
 We sleep at the foot of Cenis."

"Next morning," writes Claire in her journal, "we begin the ascent of Mont Cenis, and Shelley sang all the way—

‘How Heaven neglected is by men,  
 And Gods are hung upon every tree!  
 But not the more for loss of them  
 Shall this fair world unhappy be;’

and asserted that the mountains are God's *corps de ballet*, of which the Jungfrau is Mademoiselle Milanie. We dine on the top of Cenis, and bless Napoleon, for the passage must have been dreadful before the new road was made. We see cascades of ice, hanging in immense and frozen masses from the top to the bottom of precipices. A sight I shall never forget was a flowing stream between two snowy banks. We passed some Alpine bridges. The descent is most beautiful; the road is wide and smooth, and turns so often upon itself that the declivity is scarcely felt. The snow is gone, and both above and below one looks upon green sunny declivities separated by clumps of trees and glades. The primroses are scattered everywhere. The fruit-trees covered with the richest blossoms, which scented the air as we passed. A sky without one cloud—everything bright and serene—the cloudless sky of Italy, the bright and the beautiful."

At Susa, where the travellers visited the triumphal arch erected in honour of Augustus, the scene was one, as Mary writes in her journal, "to have pleased Hunt." A pretty woman led them to the marble monument of Roman grandeur, which rose between the background of snowy Alps and the sunny vales of Piedmont. "A ruined arch," Shelley writes, "of magnificent proportions, in the Greek taste, standing in a kind of road of green lawn overgrown with violets and

CHAP. V. primroses, and in the midst of stupendous mountains, and a  
Mar.-Nov. *blonde* woman, of light and graceful manners, something in  
1818. the style of Fuseli's Eve, were the first things we met in Italy." With delight he heard her speak "the clear and complete language of Italy," though it was but half intelligible to him. All the earth was radiant; all the heaven serene. Shelley's fluctuating spirits rose; new life welled and coursed along his veins.

The road of forty miles from Susa to Turin, through a fertile plain, amid cornfield and vine row and mulberry grove, was traversed on the last day of March, and before darkness fell upon that evening they had driven through the long avenue of elms which runs from Rivoli to the south-east, and had entered the little capital of Piedmont. "Torino," writes Claire, "is nobly built. We stay a day, and go to the Opera, of which I could neither get at its title, nor make out a single word of what it was all about. There were, however, in it some beautiful airs. The only light in the house is that which the stage affords; I could not even perceive the faces of those who sat in the loge next to ours. In three days more we get to Milan [evening of April 4]. The route is not very interesting—rural country, with cornfields and orchards. We pass many bridges of boats built over the beds of torrents, which pour down from the snowy mountains when the sun is up, and awakes the waterfalls. We lodge at the Locanda Reale."

It was Shelley's purpose to spend the summer months on the shores of the Lake of Como, thus renewing under altered circumstances some of the delights which had been his two years since at the Maison Chapuis, beside the bright waters of Geneva. A few days, therefore, at Milan sufficed for the first inspection of its objects of beauty and historical interest. The morning of his waking among the pealing bells of the city of St. Ambrose was that of Sunday, and the travellers, refreshed and alert for sight-seeing, wandered at will through its

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streets, and visited the amazing cathedral. "The effect of it," Shelley wrote a fortnight later, when he had seen the Duomo under various aspects, "piercing the solid blue with those groups of dazzling spires, relieved by the serene light of this Italian heaven, or by moonlight when the stars seem gathered among those clustered shapes, is beyond anything I had imagined architecture capable of producing." Even its Catholic interior did not now move him to such intellectual hostility and defiance as in earlier days he had expressed upon sight of our nobler minster at York. From Dante he was learning—learning perhaps unconsciously—some of the finer humanities of Catholicism; and with the "Purgatorio" or "Paradiso" in his hand, he would come alone, a docile rebel, to sit in the fragrant gloom of an aisle behind the altar. "The interior," he writes, "though very sublime, is of a more earthly character, and with its stained glass and massy granite columns overloaded with antique figures, and the silver lamps that burn for ever under the canopy of black cloth beside the brazen altar and the marble fretwork of the dome, give it the aspect of some gorgeous sepulchre. There is one solitary spot among those aisles, behind the altar, where the light of day is dim and yellow, under the storied window, which I have chosen to visit, and read Dante there."\* But Milan's proudest memories, as Shelley conceived, were not associated with her religious history, with the submission of an emperor to a saint, or with the ecclesiastical reforms of St. Charles. He sang, in later days, of the liberation of Greece from her Turkish oppressors, and, recalling to mind successive apparitions on earth of the flame-winged, eagle-hearted spirit of liberty, Shelley then remembered that Milan, where now the silent white-coated sentry paced before some government

\* The ceiling is painted, not carved in fretwork. In 1840 Mrs. Shelley visited Milan and its cathedral. "My favourite haunt," she writes, "is behind the choir, where there is a magnificent painted window, which throws rich and solemn shadows all around" ("Rambles in Germany and Italy," vol. i. p. 116).

CHAP. V. palace, had once been the centre of the resistance of the Lombard League against the German tyrant. "Frederic Mar.-Nov. 1818. Barbarossa burnt the city to the ground, but liberty lived in its ashes"—those "quenchless ashes of Milan"—"and it rose like an exhalation from its ruin." \*

At La Scala on Sunday evening was presented an opera, followed by the ballet of "Othello." The opera, of which a chief function was ordinarily to promote conversation—the "crocchio ristretto" of the boxes—could not be heard; but with the choral and pantomimic "Othello" Shelley, to his own surprise, was highly pleased—so much pleased that he visited the theatre a second time before setting out for Como, and saw the same performances repeated. "The manner in which language is translated into gesture," he wrote to Peacock, "the complete and full effect of the whole as illustrating the history in question, the unaffected self-possession of each of the actors, even to the children, made this choral drama more impressive than I could have conceived possible. The story is 'Othello,' and, strange to say, it left no disagreeable impression." If there was not a Mdle. Milanie at La Scala, there was in the *prima ballerina* an admirable and distinguished actress—"one of the finest actresses in Europe," says Lady Morgan. A third time, towards the close of April, the English travellers saw "Othello," and Claire expresses in her journal an enthusiasm which helps to interpret that of Shelley. "The Venetian dance," she writes, "embodies the idea I had formed of the ancient dances of the bacchantes. It is full of mad and intoxicating joy, which nevertheless is accompanied by voluptuousness. Maria Pallerini, the Desdemona, is a lovely creature. Her walk is more like

\* Miss Clairmont's description of the cathedral in her journal may be compared with Shelley's: "I can conceive of no building that partakes more perfectly of the nature of air and heaven. The carved pinnacles, whiter than snow, rise into the clouds; the dazzling white of the marble and the immensity of the work impress one with the belief of the aid of some supernatural power. We went up it. There is a winding staircase, the steps of marble confined on each side by slight irons running horizontally; it rises from the body of the building, and seems to ascend to the clouds. This is the work also of Napoleon."

the sweepings of the wind than the steps of a mortal, and her attitudes are pictures." \*

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On April 9, Shelley and Mary set forth to seek a summer residence by the Lake of Como, leaving Claire and Elise with the little ones at Milan.

*Mary Shelley's Journal.*

"*Thursday, April 9.*—Shelley and I journey towards Como. The weather is beautiful, and the country we pass through continued gardens. We arrive at Como about three, and after dinner go out on the lake, which is narrow, but very beautiful. The mountains come precipitously down to the lake, and are covered with chestnut woods. In the evening read an Italian translation of 'Pamela.'

"*Friday, April 10.*—In the morning we go out on the lake to look for a house, with a person we are recommended to by Signor Marietta. We see a very nice house, but out of repair, with an excellent garden, but full of serpents. On our return from the Villa Lanzi we leave our companion, and set out for the Tremezzina. Nothing can be more divine than the shores of this lovely lake. We go to look at the house of a M. Sommariva, and are joined by the master, who makes his apologies that he cannot accompany us in our search. We sleep at an inn here.

"*Saturday, April 11.*—We look at a house beautifully situated, but too small; and afterwards, crossing the lake, at another magnificent one, which we shall be very happy if we obtain. We then return to Como. Nothing can be more divine than the shores—partly bare, partly overgrown with laurels. We visit a fine waterfall and the Pliniana. The wind is against us, and the lake rather rough. We arrive at

\* "Othello" was composed by Vigano, author of "La Vestale," the "Didone Abbandonata," and other famous *ballets d'action*. A medal was struck in his honour—on one side Vigano's head, on the other Prometheus chained, to commemorate his ballet on that subject.



CHAP. V. Como about five. Shelley has finished the 'Life of Tasso,'  
 Mar.-Nov. and reads Dante. Read 'Pamela.' A thunderstorm."  
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An adventure on one of these days, unrecorded by Mrs. Shelley, was related to Claire when, on Sunday, April 12, they returned to Milan.

*Claire Clairmont's Journal.*

"*Sunday, April 12.*—M. and S. return. Talk of the Lake of Como. Curious adventure. When they were at Como, Shelley thought he would take a walk to some solitary place, that he might fire off his pistol, which had been loaded during our whole journey. In walking he observed two men to follow him, and when he got pretty far he stopped till they came up to him. They said they were police, and must take him into custody, as it was forbidden to any one to be carrying arms about as he was. He expostulated, but they persisted in carrying him before the Prefect. This gentleman, when he heard that Shelley was an Englishman and his intention with regard to the pistol, behaved with the greatest politeness, but said he should keep his pistol safe in his custody till he had heard from Madame Shelley that her husband had no intention of shooting himself through the head. Mary having certified this, the pistol was rendered. In the evening we ride round the Corso. Play at chess with Shelley."

In the express purpose of his visit to Como, Shelley was not successful; the house for which he was negotiating never became his; but he had not lost these days, for he brought back delighted memories of his excursion. The Lake of Como seemed to him to exceed in charm anything he had ever beheld, with the exception of the arbutus islands of Killarney. The degree in which it united cultivated beauty with the untamable profusion and loveliness of nature distinguished it from its rivals of Switzerland or the north of England. The highest mountains covered with perpetual snow, the chestnut

forests, with village church towers gleaming white amid their dusky greenery, the multitude of fruit-bearing and blossom-bearing shrubs, the spiring cypress-trees, the rifted recesses of the hills, the shadowed glens "filled with the flashing light of the waterfalls," the clustered habitations or scattered villas of the Milanese nobility—these are imaged by Shelley in his letter to Peacock, in words which seem to have caught light and animation from the joy within him, or from the radiant air and sky. "The finest scenery," he writes, "is that of the Villa Pliniana; so called from a fountain which ebbs and flows every three hours, described by the younger Pliny, which is in the courtyard. This house, which was once a magnificent palace, and is now half in ruins, we are endeavouring to procure. It is built upon terraces *raised from* the bottom of the lake, together with its garden, at the foot of a semicircular precipice, overshadowed by profound forests of chestnut. The scene from the colonnade is the most extraordinary at once, and the most lovely that eye ever beheld. On one side is the mountain, and immediately over you are clusters of cypress-trees of an astonishing height, which seem to pierce the sky. Above you, from among the clouds, as it were, descends a waterfall of immense size, broken by the woody rocks into a thousand channels to the lake. On the other side is seen the blue extent of the lake and the mountains, speckled with sails and spires. The apartments of the Pliniana are immensely large, but ill-furnished and antique. The terraces, which overlook the lake, and conduct under the shade of such immense laurel trees as deserve the epithet of Pythian, are most delightful." \* To Shelley, whose chief pleasure in life, he declared, was the contemplation of nature, there came a sense of heavy loss when it was ascertained that they must forego "the divine solitude" of Como. †

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\* To Peacock: Milan, April 20, 1818. The Villa Pliniana was built in 1750. Lady Morgan describes it "with its deep gloom of black rocks, its sibyl groves, and roaring cascades."

† To Peacock: Milan, April 30.

CHAP. V.      The later days in Milan went by in uneventful fashion. A ride on the Corso, a visit to the opera, a walk in the public gardens with Shelley and "itty Ba,"\* Shelley's reading aloud of "Hamlet," his ending the "Purgatorio" and beginning the "Paradiso," an Italian lesson from Signor Mombelli, a letter from Peacock, a game at chess—these, and such as these, are the principal entries in the journals of Mary and of Miss Clairmont. On April 26, Claire ceased to make a record of events, and did not resume her journal until the travellers, a month later, had been for some time settled at Leghorn. April 27 was Claire Clairmont's twentieth birthday—a sorrowful birthday, for on the morrow she must part from the child, a most lovely and engaging creature, in whom her heart was centred. From Lyons Shelley had written to Byron, who had refused to correspond with Claire, informing him that Allegra had come thus far upon the way. Again from Milan he had written, inviting Byron to visit him when he could, and take the child into his own charge; but Byron's heart had hardened against the woman whom he had wronged, and it may be that he dreaded and hated the scenes which might be expected when the mother should part from her beloved one. "Letter from Albè," Claire enters in her journal (April 21); "nothing but discomfort." On the next day she took courage and explained to Byron by letter the motives and feelings which induced her, so much against the promptings of her heart, to comply with his desire to have possession of his daughter. At this point Shelley might well have withdrawn from an affair which, strictly, was none of his. But Byron's written words had seemed to make it clear that in his view the approaching farewell between Claire and her child must be absolute and final; and against a decision so unjust and cruel Shelley felt bound to plead. His letter had not been long despatched before he encountered at the Milan post-office a Venetian, whose tidings of Byron's way of life, enlivened perhaps with

\* Claire's pet word for "little babe."

tales of Marianna Segati, were far from reassuring. "Shelley," CHAP. V.  
 writes Claire in her journal (April 24), "has a curious *ren-* Mar.-Nov.  
*contre* at the post-office with a Venetian, and hears no agree- 1818.  
 able news of Albè." But the decision had been made, and  
 no doubts or apprehensions ought to stand in the way of  
 Allegra's brilliant future as daughter of an English nobleman  
 —the most illustrious poet of Europe. Accordingly, on April  
 28, Elise, in whom Mary had the utmost confidence as an  
 affectionate and faithful nurse, started with the little one for  
 Venice, where, it was hoped, she might remain in Byron's  
 employ, and take the place of a mother to the babe. On that  
 cruel day Claire's unhappiness was bitter and profound.  
 "Before we parted at Geneva," she afterwards wrote in a  
 note-book, "he [Byron] talked over with me our situation;  
 he proposed to place the child when born in Mrs. Leigh's care.  
 To this I objected, on the ground that a child always wanted  
 a parent's care at least till seven years old; rather than that,  
 I would keep the child with me, though of course for the  
 child there were great objections to that. He yielded, and  
 said it was best it should live with him; he promised, faith-  
 fully promised, never to give it until seven years of age into  
 a stranger's care; I was to be called the child's aunt, and in  
 that character I could see it and watch over it without injury  
 to any one's reputation. Believing in these promises, in the  
 spring of 1818 I sent my little darling. She was the only  
 thing I had to love, the only object in the world I could call  
 my very own; and I had never parted with her from her  
 birth, not for an hour even. . . . I will say nothing as to  
 what the parting cost me; but I felt that I ought not for  
 the sake of gratifying my own affections deprive her of a  
 brilliant position in life." It would appear that at the last  
 moment Shelley warned Claire of the risk she ran of losing  
 the child for ever. "Remember, Claire," he wrote to her  
 when, not many days before Allegra's death, the mother was  
 eager to obtain possession of her darling, "when you rejected

CHAP. V. my earnest advice, and checked me with that contempt which  
 Mar.-Nov. 1818. I have not merited from you at Milan, and how vain is now  
 your regret! This is the second of my sibylline volumes; if  
 you wait for the third, it may be sold at a still higher price.”  
 But Claire was resolute; it was for Allegra’s welfare that her  
 father should know and love his child.

On the eve of setting forth for Pisa, Shelley wrote to  
 Hogg, Peacock, and Horace Smith. The following letter, of  
 which the address has unfortunately been lost, was probably  
 addressed to Smith. It resumes some of his impressions of  
 Italy and the Italians as formed from a first brief acquaintance.

*Shelley to a Friend (probably Horace Smith).\**

Milan, April 30, 1818.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I received your note a few hours before I left England,  
 and have designed to write to you from every town on the route;  
 but the difficulty not so much of knowing what to say as how to  
 say it prevented me till this moment. I was sorry that I did not  
 see you again before my departure. On my return, which will  
 not perhaps take place so soon as I at first expected, we shall meet  
 again; meanwhile my letters to Hunt and Peacock are, as it were,  
 common property, of which, if you feel any curiosity about me  
 which I neglect to satisfy myself, you are at liberty to avail your-  
 self of. To-morrow we leave this city for Pisa, where, or in its  
 neighbourhood, we shall remain during the summer.

The Italians—at least those whom I have seen—are a very  
 different people from the French. They have less character; and  
 the women especially seem a very inferior race of beings. Their  
 manners, so far as I can judge, from their mien and physiognomy,  
 are at once prudish and coquettish; their features bony; their  
 figures thin; and those who have any claims to beauty have a  
 beauty superficial, and of a cold and unfeeling character. Their  
 voices have none of that winning persuasiveness of those of France,  
 but are hard and without inflexion or variety of tone. But this  
 holds good, as I know, only to Milan, as my experience extends no  
 further. The architecture of the cathedral of this city exceeds

\* The original is in the possession of Mr. Alfred Morrison, by whose kind  
 permission I have made a copy.

anything I ever saw in the Gothic style; it is far superior to CHAP. V.  
 York Minster or Westminster Abbey. The Opera is very good, Mar.-Nov.  
 and the house larger or at least as large as that of London. They 1818.  
 have Mad. Camporese here as the prima donna—a cold and un-  
 feeling singer and a bad actress. The best singer is a man called  
 David. Their ballets, which are a kind of pantomimic dance  
 illustrative of some story, are much superior to anything of the  
 kind in England. Indeed, they are wholly unlike anything  
 represented on our stage, being a combination of a great number  
 of figures grouped with the most picturesque and even poetical  
 effect, and perpetually changing with motions the most harmoniously  
 interwoven and contrasted with great effect. Othello is repre-  
 sented in one of these ballets, and the story is so well told in  
 action as to leave upon the mind an impression as of a real tragedy.

We have been to the Lake of Como, and indeed had some  
 thought of taking our residence there for the summer. The  
 scenery is very beautiful, abounding among other things with  
 those green banks for the sake of which you represented me as  
 wandering over the world. You are more interested in the human  
 part of the experience of travelling; a thing of which I see little  
 and understand less, and which if I saw and understood more I  
 fear I should be little able to describe. I am just reading a novel  
 of Wieland's called "Aristippus," which I think you would like.  
 It is very Greek, though perhaps not religious enough for a true  
 Pagan. If you can get it otherwise, do not read it in the French  
 translation, as the impudent translator has omitted much of the  
 original, to accommodate it, as he says, to the "fastidious taste  
 and powerful understanding of his countrymen."

I have read some Greek but not much on my journey—two or  
 three plays of Euripides—and among them the "Ion," which you  
 praised and which I think is exquisitely beautiful. But I have  
 [now\*] made some Italian book my companion from my [wish] to  
 learn the language, so as to speak it. I have been studying the  
 history of Tasso's life, with some idea of making a drama of his  
 adventures and misfortunes [ ] such a subject would suit  
 English poetry [ ].

Address Poste Restante, Pisa,

Most sincerely yours,

P. B. SHELLEY.

\* Part of the letter is injured. I supply some words in brackets conjecturally.

CHAP. V. If you see Miss Lamb, present my compts., and tell her that I  
 Mar.—Nov. did not pass through Paris, but that I put her letter in the nearest  
 1818. post. Remember me also to the Dr.

Shelley's unfavourable estimate of the Italian men and women—the men “a tribe of stupid and shrivelled slaves,” the women “a mixture of the coquette and prude”—was formed, says Mrs. Shelley, in ignorance and with precipitation, and was altogether altered after a longer stay in Italy. A far finer observer of manners than Shelley, and in some respects a finer observer of the more complex traits of human character, Henri Beyle, spent a considerable time in Milan in the autumn of 1816. While struck by the noble outline, and on rare occasions by the passionate beauty of the faces of the Milanese, Beyle, like Shelley, missed in Italian men the animation of French expression—“le fier, l'ingenieux, le piquant;” and in Italian women “l'air riant et conquérant,” which one finds in French society. Their faces in repose took an aspect, as it seemed to him, “sombre and almost terrible.”\* It was characteristic of Shelley that he should ascribe the imagined lack of beauty in the inhabitants of Lombardy to the withering effects of Austrian tyranny.

The journey from Milan to Pisa and thence to Leghorn is more fully described in the diaries of Mary Shelley and Miss Clairmont than in Shelley's letters to Peacock.

*Mary Shelley's Journal.*

“*Friday, May 1.*—Set out from Milan; sleep at Piacenza. The country is pleasant and fertile.

“*Saturday, May 2.*—Sleep at Parma. The country becomes more fertile and picturesque; the horizon is bounded by the Apennines; but we travel along a fertile plain, chiefly corn-fields, planted with trees, up which the vines are trained and then festooned from one tree to another. Parma is a dear

\* “Rome, Florence, et Naples,” vol. i. pp. 51, 52.

town. Read 'Les Abderites' [by Wieland]. Shelley finishes CHAP. V.  
'Aristippe.'

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"*Sunday, May 3.*—Sleep at Modena. We approach the mountains.

"*Monday, May 4.*—Dine at Bologna, and from thence, leaving the fertile plains, we ascend the mountains and sleep at a solitary inn among them."

This solitary inn was probably the wretched Locanda of Pietra Mala—the only visible habitation in a wild landscape, as strange within as the wreck of volcanic disturbance was without, with its dark stone stairs, its cells for sleep, its common hall, rude kitchen, and the vast concave hearth in which the brushwood blazed and crackled.\* It was at this inn among the mountains, while the wind howled dismally outside, under a dim starlight, that Shelley conceived or wrote his lines on the passage of the Apennines:—

"Listen, listen, Mary mine,  
To the whisper of the Apennine.  
It bursts on the roof like the thunder's rear;  
Or like the sea on a northern shore,  
Heard in its raging ebb and flow  
By the captives pent in the cave below."

The storm-wind of the Apennines sounds also in Claire Clairmont's journal, and with it a mother's suppressed moan for the lost Allegra.

*Claire Clairmont's Journal.*

"The scenery to Bologna was flat, but of incredible luxuriancy. The travelling in Italy seems like riding perpetually through pleasure-grounds, where even the greatest art has been employed to give an air of Nature. The weather was delightful; a full sun in a cloudless blue sky looking

\* I have formed my description of the old inn at Pietra Mala from that of Lady Morgan. On the next night, Shelley and his party slept at Barberino.



CHAP. V. down upon the scene of green below. The fields are planted with rows of trees, under which the vine twines and twists till it attains the summit and falls in countless festoons, stretching till it reach another. Under the trees, which themselves are sometimes fruit-trees, waves the high and beautiful corn. The hedges are full of flowers, and swarms of insects buzz in the sun. The motion of the carriage lulls one generally into a state of quiet observation and enjoyment; and when I travel regularly on I cannot help hoping that the long straight road I see before me will take me to some place where I shall be happier.

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“The northern side of the Apennines is not highly cultivated. In one thing they differ highly from the Alps. In the latter the road runs along deep and narrow ravines; the mountains rise on either side, and close somewhat in above, leaving but small portions of the blue sky to be seen; but among the Apennines one travels along wide flat valleys which form their summits; the whole sky is seen, and I can compare it to nothing but some of those extensive plains we have in England with gentle ascents and declivities.\* The wind is always high, and it howls dismally.

“The southern side of the Apennines is more fertile. There we see again the chestnut woods and plantations of evergreen oak. The banks of the Arno are very beautiful. Its valley is wide, and the sloping hills are well covered with trees. Everywhere I was struck by the extreme fertility. The peasants have a better character of face; they seem rich and cheerful. Their wives and daughters we saw walking on the roads after goats, or standing at the doors of their neat cottages busily employed in plaiting straw, by which they gain greatly. Barberino is a village almost entirely composed

\* Compare Shelley's words in a letter to Peacock: Livorno, June 5, 1818. “This part of the Apennines is far less beautiful than the Alps; the mountains are wide and wild, and the whole scenery broad and undetermined—the imagination cannot find a home in it.”

of country houses. Here the Tuscan nobility retire for a month or so in the autumn.

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"Pisa is a very large town in extent, but scantily peopled.\* The Arno here is yellow and muddy, and there is altogether an air of poverty and wretchedness in this town. The convicts, who are very numerous, work in the streets, cleaning and sweeping them; they are dressed in red; they are chained by the leg together in pairs. All the day long one hears the slow clanking of their chains and the rumbling of the cart they drag, as if they were so many beasts of burden; and if one goes to the window, one is sure to see their yellow faces and emaciated forms."

Mary, in her journal, acknowledges the depression of spirits caused by the sight of these unhappy criminals. In later days their misery was a grief to Shelley. "I have seen him," writes Medwin, in a manuscript note intended to form an addition to his "Life of Shelley," "very much affected by the sight of the convicts fettered two and two, who, escorted by soldiers, sweep the streets, and still more so by the clank of their chains."†

Two nights at the Tre Donzelle, with a visit to the cathedral and the Leaning Tower, satisfied the travellers' curiosity as regards Pisa. A letter from Elise, assuring them of Allegra's safe arrival at Venice, was received, and left them free to depart. Pisa, indeed, had attractions not possessed by bustling Leghorn, city of warehousemen, and Jews, and galley-slaves, and vagabonds, and beggars; but at Leghorn resided Mr. and Mrs. Gisborne, to whom they bore a letter of introduction from Godwin; and Mary could not but take a peculiar interest in forming the acquaintance of a lady who was an old and valued friend of her father.

\* "A large disagreeable city, almost without inhabitants" (Shelley to Peacock, June 5, 1818).

† Medwin's copy of his "Life of Shelley," prepared for a second edition, with many manuscript notes, is in possession of Mr. J. Dykes Campbell, who kindly permitted me to make use of it.

CHAP. V. Mrs. Gisborne, born in the year 1770, was the daughter of  
 Mar.-Nov. 1818. an English merchant at Constantinople, named James. Her father had left her in infancy with her mother in England, regardless of their solitude and penury. When Maria was eight years old, Mrs. James took a desperate resolution, and sailed to Constantinople with her daughter. Mr. James refused to receive his wife, but he was so highly pleased with his little Maria that he contrived to steal her from her mother, and secrete her in the house of a Turk, until, by the promise of an annuity, he had persuaded his wife to return to England. "The little Maria was then taken home, and brought up with sedulous care. Many accomplishments were taught her, and on one of the first side-saddles which appeared in the East she accompanied her father in his rides in the environs of Constantinople. While yet a mere child she looked womanly and formed, and entered into the society of English merchants and diplomatists. Having no proper chaperon, she was left to run wild as she might, and at a very early age had gone through the romance of life." \* When, in 1785, Jeremy Bentham visited his brother Samuel at Constantinople, he formed the acquaintance of Maria James, then aged fifteen; and he and she, both skilled in music, would play together the sonatas of Eichner for pianoforte and violin. Miss James, Bentham would say, was the first lady he had met who could "strictly keep time." Scarcely less was her talent for painting, and when, a little later, her father left Constantinople for Rome, it was her wish to cultivate this art under the tuition of Angelica Kaufmann. "Barry," she writes, "who was professor of painting at the Royal Academy at the time when Sir Joshua Reynolds was president, on being shown some specimens of my labours, was so well satisfied with the progress I had then

\* Mrs. Shelley's note, printed in Mr. Kegan Paul's "William Godwin," i. pp. 81, 82, some of whose words I adopt without marking them as quotations. I have been able to supplement this from a long and interesting letter from Mrs. Gisborne to Jeremy Bentham (in Mr. Forman's possession), and a series of unpublished notes on "Shelley Memorials," by her son, Henry Reveley.

made, that, with all his characteristic vehemence, he never CHAP. V.  
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1818. ceased to urge me to pursue the career which, he said, I had so successfully commenced.” It was at Rome that her beauty won the admiration of the architect, Willey Reveley, then travelling in company with James Stuart, the celebrated student and delineator of Athenian antiquities.\* Mr. Reveley and Miss James were married and came to England. Mrs. Reveley was “very young and very beautiful”—it is Mary Shelley who writes thus—“and she possessed a peculiar charm of character in her deep sensibility, and an ingenuous modesty that knew no guile; this was added to ardour in the pursuit of knowledge, a liberal and unquenchable curiosity. Parties ran high in those days. Her husband joined the Liberal side, and entered with enthusiasm into the hopes and expectations of political freedom which then filled every heart to bursting. The consequence of these principles was to lead to his acquaintance with many of their popular advocates, and among them with Godwin and Holcroft. There was a gentleness and yet a fervour in the minds of both Mrs. Reveley and Godwin that led to sympathy. He was ready to gratify her desire for knowledge, and she drank eagerly of the philosophy which he offered. It was pure but warm friendship, which might have grown into another feeling had they been differently situated.”

When Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin died, having given birth to her daughter—now the wife of Shelley—Mrs. Reveley took the infant to her home, and cared for the babe as though it were her own. Two years later Mrs. Reveley was left a widow with an only son. Within a month Godwin had asked her to be his wife; but Maria Reveley, who had honoured Godwin as her philosophic friend and master, was not inclined to accept him for her husband. Mr. John Gisborne, to whom she was married in 1800, had been in his youth engaged in

\* Mr. Reveley afterwards assisted Jeremy Bentham with his “Panopticon,” and made drawings for the plates.

CHAP. V. the business of a merchant; his timidity, however, and a certain want of tact, stood in the way of success. In the year following their marriage, Mr. and Mrs. Gisborne, with Mrs. Gisborne's son by her first marriage, Henry Willey Reveley, now thirteen years old, left England for Rome. Mr. Gisborne, a man of considerable culture, devoted himself to the education of the boy, hoping for him a brilliant success in life, not now to be attained by himself. Instruction was cheap in Italy, and for eight years, during which the Gisbornes resided at Rome and Pisa as Napoleon's prisoners of war, in addition to Mr. Gisborne's instruction, Henry, who had chosen the profession of civil engineer, studied under some of the most eminent professors of mathematics and natural philosophy. In classical learning he made small progress, but early distinguished himself at the University of Pisa by his scientific attainments. A petition to the Emperor Napoleon, begging that Henry might be allowed to complete his studies at Paris in the Polytechnic School, was peremptorily dismissed. Various attempts of the young man to obtain employment as an engineer in Italy proved unsuccessful; the improvements which he had effected in the Grand Duke's ironworks, and his proposal for grinding corn by means of a steam-engine, won him but little advantage. In 1815, Mr. Gisborne attempted to resume his career as a merchant by connecting himself with an English house established at Leghorn, but he failed in his purpose; nor did he succeed in obtaining the vice-consulship for which he had at one time hoped. By the year 1818 he seems to have settled down as an unambitious student among his books. But Henry Reveley, the "machinista," was still full of enterprise, and stood, a baffled but ingenious mage, among his "shapes of unintelligible brass"—

"A horrid mass  
Of tin and iron not to be understood,  
And forms of unimaginable wood,

To puzzle Tubal Cain and all his brood ;  
Great screws, and cones, and wheels, and grooved blocks." \*

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When the wanderers reached Leghorn, a week of May had gone by. Soon the oppressive heats of summer would drive them from the streets and quays in search of some leafy coolness. Meanwhile the days were pleasantly passed in walks and talks with their new friends, in Italian lessons, and in multifarious reading for study or recreation.

*Mary Shelley's Journal.*

"*Saturday, May 9.*—Journey to Leghorn. After we arrive, walk out. A stupid town. We see the Mediterranean. Read a French translation of Lucian. Mrs. Gisborne calls in the evening with her husband ; she is reserved, yet with easy manners.

"*Sunday, May 10.*—Read translation of Lucian. Shelley reads Euripides. Call on Mrs. Gisborne. In the evening walk on the Mole ; meet Mrs. Gisborne ; a long conversation with her about my father and mother.

"*Monday, May 11.*—Read Lucian. Shelley reads Manzo's 'Life of Tasso.' Walk out in the evening with Mr. and Mrs. Gisborne.

"This is repeated through the week."

\* Letter to Maria Gisborne. It may be of interest to note a few facts about the subsequent career of Shelley's friend, Henry Reveley. He read papers before the "Society for the Encouragement of Arts, etc.," printed in the Transactions, on an improved method of paving, and an improved method of cutting millstones, for which he received the Society's silver medal. He entered the lists with the candidates for the rebuilding of London Bridge. Rennie was the successful candidate. In 1824 Reveley married Miss Fielding, sister of the artist, Copley Fielding. She painted well. Reveley was appointed architect and civil engineer at the Cape of Good Hope, with a salary from Government of £500 a year. He built a church at Cape Town. After three years he was dismissed, unjustly, he declared, through the influence of the Lieutenant-Governor. He accompanied Governor Stirling, of Swan River, to Western Australia, and there got a post similar to that at the Cape. He was "practically the founder of the city of Perth." His greatest work was a jail. His mother, from whose letter, written to Jeremy Bentham shortly before Bentham's death, these details are taken, describes him as a Robinson Crusoe. I may note that the volume, "Notices, etc., illustrative of the Drawings and Sketches of some of the most Distinguished Masters" (1820), is by a different Henry Reveley.

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While Shelley and Mary steadily progressed together from canto to canto of Ariosto, he also read with eager delight the Greek tragedians, the "Hippolytus" of Euripides being succeeded by the "Philoctetes," the "Electra," and the "Ajax" of Sophocles. Was he thus disciplining his imagination for dramatic writing?—for to Shelley it seemed that the dramatic art was never understood or practised, according to the true philosophy of it, as at Athens.\* "The tragedies of the Athenian poets," he writes, "are as mirrors in which the spectator beholds himself, under a thin disguise of circumstance, stript of all but that ideal perfection and energy which every one feels to be the internal type of all that he loves, admires, and would become." Except Henry Reveley's steam-engine, and the sight of the sea, there was little in Leghorn outside their apartment to interest Shelley. Maria Gisborne was to him "the sole attraction in this most unattractive of cities." At a later date, he wrote of Mr. Gisborne to Peacock, in anticipation perhaps of a severe sentence from the author of so many sparkling witticisms, as though he would find Gisborne a proser, and a sieve through which much learning had passed; but, in truth, Shelley's letters addressed to Gisborne prove that he was a man who could follow with intelligent sympathy his friend's highest studies in literature. To Peacock he appeared agreeable and well-informed. And if the vastitude of Mr. Gisborne's nose was, as Shelley says, Slawkenbergian, the extent of his library might be considered a redeeming feature of the man. "Mrs. Gisborne," Shelley wrote to Peacock in 1819, "is a sufficiently amiable and very accomplished woman; she is δημοκρατικη and αθηνη—how far she may be φιλανθρωπη I don't know, for she is the antipodes of enthusiasm. Her husband, a man with little thin lips, receding forehead, and a prodigious nose, is an excessive bore. His nose is something quite Slawkenbergian †—it

\* "A Defence of Poetry."

† See the account of Hafen Slawkenbergius's great work in "Tristram Shandy."

weighs on the imagination to look at it. It is that sort of CHAP. V.  
 nose which transforms all the *g*'s its wearer utters into *h*'s. Mar.-Nov.  
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 It is a nose once seen never to be forgotten, and which requires  
 the utmost stretch of Christian charity to forgive. I, you  
 know, have a little turn-up nose; Hogg has a large hook one;  
 but add them both together, square them, cube them, you will  
 have but a faint idea of the nose to which I refer." If Mr.  
 Gisborne was himself dull, it is at least evident that his nose  
 could be a cause of wit in other men.\*

Towards the close of May, Shelley, unaccompanied by Mary  
 or Claire, visited the Baths of Lucca. It would seem that he  
 went thither to seek a house for the summer months, and if  
 so he was successful in his quest. "Travel to Bagni di Lucca,"  
 Mary enters in her journal (June 11, 1818), "and settle our-  
 selves a little in our house."† The season for the Baths had  
 not yet quite come, and the heat was hardly so great as to  
 make late sunrises and early sunsets in the leafiest of Tuscan  
 valleys a necessity. But the inland quiet and refreshment  
 tasted exquisite to senses somewhat fatigued by the bustle of  
 an Italian Wapping and the dull pomps of Corpus Christi  
 processions. "It is strange . . . after having been accustomed  
 for a month to the tumult of the Via Grande," so wrote Mary  
 Shelley to Mrs. Gisborne four days after their arrival, "to  
 come to this quiet scene, where we hear no sound except the  
 rushing of the river in the valley below. While at Livorno, I  
 hardly heard the noise; but when I came here, I felt the  
 silence as a return to something very delightful from which  
 I had been long absent. We live here in the midst of a  
 beautiful scene, and I wish that I had the imagination and

\* Leigh Hunt, in a letter to Shelley (August 23 1820), writes, "Mr. Gisborne is placidity personified. He seems born to wear a meek great-coat, sip tea in summer-time, and agree with one's arguments."

† The house was probably one belonging to a Signor Chiappa, named in Mary's journal and Shelley's letters. I find in Mariana Starke's "Travels in Europe" (1828), p. 186, that in 1817 the first floor in the house of Signor G. B. del Chiappa, at the Baths of Lucca, let for twenty-eight sequins a month.



CHAP. V. expressions of a poet to describe it as it deserves, and to fill  
 Mar.-Nov. 1818. you all with an ardent desire to visit it. We are surrounded by mountains covered with thick chestnut woods; they are peaked and picturesque, and sometimes you see peeping above them the bare summit of a distant Apennine. Vines are cultivated at the foot of the mountains. The walks in the woods are delightful; for I like nothing so much as to be surrounded by the foliage of trees, only peeping now and then through the leafy screen on the scene about me. You can either walk by the side of the river or on commodious paths cut in the mountains; and for rambles the woods are intersected with narrow paths in every direction. Our house is small, but commodious, and exceedingly clean, for it has just been painted, and the furniture is quite new. We have a small garden, and at the end of it is an arbour of laurel trees, so thick that the sun does not penetrate it; nor has my prediction followed us, that we should everywhere find it cold. Although not hot, the weather has been very pleasant. We see the fire-flies in an evening, somewhat dimmed by the bright rays of the moon."

It was an uneventful life under green chestnut boughs, and within hearing of the Lima dashing upon its rocks, "We lead here," wrote Mary to Mrs. Gisborne (June 15), "a very quiet, pleasant life, reading our canto of Ariosto, and walking in the evening among these delightful woods." The Casino, resort, especially on Sunday evenings, of those who loved to dance, was not yet open, or at least was not frequented. But with the early days of July visitors crowded to the Baths, among whom the British sight-seer made himself conspicuous—not to Mrs. Shelley's delectation. "We see none but English," she wrote (July 2), "we hear nothing but English spoken. The walks are filled with English nursery-maids—a kind of animal I by no means like—and dashing staring Englishwomen, who surprise the Italians (who always are carried about in sedan chairs) by riding on horseback."

If her countrywomen did not please Mary, to Shelley the CHAP. V. women of Italy did not appear more attractive. When, on Mar.-Nov. Sunday evenings of July, the Casino filled, he would look on 1818. charmed by the grace of the dances—"so exquisitely beautiful," he says, "that it would be a little dangerous to the newly unfrozen senses and imaginations of us migrators from the neighbourhood of the pole;" dances in which Mary and Claire did not join—whether they refrained from philosophy or Protestantism Shelley could not tell.\* But his delight in the motions of the dances—of the waltz especially—did not beguile him into admiration of the dancers. "The modern Italians," he writes to Godwin (July 25), "are a miserable people, without sensibility, or imagination, or understanding. Their outside is polished, and an intercourse with them seems to proceed with much facility, though it ends in nothing and produces nothing. The women are particularly empty, and, though possessed of the same kind of superficial grace, are devoid of any cultivation and refinement." And to Peacock, "We have been over to the Casino, where I cannot say there is anything remarkable, the women being far removed from anything which the most liberal annotator could interpret into beauty or grace, and apparently possessing no intellectual excellences to compensate the deficiency." Dearer to Shelley than the faces and fashions of the Casino were the changeable aspects of sky and air, of gathering or dispersing clouds, and of the great star that rose luminous in the south-east when the sun had sunk. "I take great delight in watching the changes of the atmosphere here, and the growth of the thunder-showers with which the moon is often overshadowed, and which break and fade away towards evening into flocks of delicate clouds. Our fire-flies are fading away fast; but there is the planet Jupiter, who rises majestically over the rift in the

\* Mrs. Shelley wrote to Leigh Hunt (August 28, 1819), "The Italians dance very badly. They dress for their dances in the ugliest manner; the men in little doublets, with a hat and feather. They are very stiff—nothing but their legs move; and they twirl and jump with as little grace as may be."

CHAP. V. forest-covered mountains to the south, and the pale summer lightning which is spread out every night, at intervals, over the sky. No doubt Providence has contrived these things that, when the fire-flies go out, the low-flying owl may see her way home.\* While he gazed eastward upon Jupiter, Shelley remembered the Venus of last summer, when, in place of the Lima or the Serchio, the Thames flowed near—a planet more aeri-ally radiant, with a softer yet more piercing splendour than belonged to this Italian Jupiter, possessed in virtue, perhaps, of its nature, at once female and divine. “I have forgotten,” adds Shelley, “to ask the ladies if Jupiter produces on them the same effect.”

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As the heat increased, Mary and Claire, like other English ladies, rode—with Shelley for escort—either before breakfast, or after dinner when the evening began to grow cool, returning home by the light of the stars. About midday, or in the early afternoon, it was Shelley’s custom to seek refreshment in a bathing-place hidden deep in the woodlands, where the torrent paused, after it had flung itself into a rocky basin. “It is surrounded on all sides by precipitous rocks, and the waterfall of the stream which forms it falls into it on one side with perpetual dashing. Close to it, on the top of the rocks, are alders, and above the great chestnut-trees, whose long and pointed leaves pierce the deep blue sky in strong relief. The water of this pool, which, to venture an unrhythmical paraphrase, is ‘sixteen feet long and ten feet wide,’† is as transparent as the air, so that the stones and sand at the bottom seem, as it were, trembling in the light of noonday. It is exceedingly cold also. My custom is to undress and sit on the rocks, reading Herodotus, until the perspiration has subsided, and then to leap from the edge of the rock into this fountain—a

\* To Mr. and Mrs. Gisborne, July 10, 1818.

† “I’ve measured it from side to side:

’Tis three feet long, and two feet wide.”

Wordsworth, “The Thorn”—in the earlier text.

practice in the hot weather excessively refreshing. The torrent is composed, as it were, of a succession of pools and waterfalls, up which I sometimes amuse myself by climbing when I bathe, and receiving the spray over all my body, whilst I clamber up the moist crags with difficulty." On the last day of June, Shelley and Mary rode to the Prato Fiorito, a meadow on the top of one of the neighbouring Apennines, thick-strewn with blossoming jonquils, whose excess of sweetness, it is said, almost caused Shelley to faint. "We rode among chestnut woods," Mary Shelley wrote to Mrs. Gisborne, "hearing the noisy cicala; and there was nothing disagreeable in it except the steepness of the ascent. The woods about here are in every way delightful, especially when they are plain, with grassy walks through them. They are filled with sweet singing birds, and not long ago we heard a cuckoo." If it be true, as Medwin declares, that Shelley described to him the faintness which seized him in midst of the piercing sweetness of the odorous meadow, we have evidently a reminiscence of this day among the Apennines in certain lines of "Epipsy-chidion"—

"From the moss violets and jonquils peep,  
And dart their arrowy odour through the brain  
Till you might faint with that delicious pain."

A sense of decaying sweetness must have hung over the beauty of the Prato Fiorito at the close of June.

Shelley's box of books, apparently detained for the inspection of the clerical censor, at length reached him while he was a visitor at the Baths. With his wonted ardour, while standing aloof from the motley company of the Italian watering-place, he sought delight and instruction in "the choice society of all ages." The "Persæ" of Æschylus, the "Clouds," the "Plutus," and the "Lysistrata" of Aristophanes, Theocritus, Xenophon's "Memorabilia," Herodotus, Lucian, Virgil's "Georgics," Horace, are names which appear in Mary's journal as forming part of Shelley's studies at this period. Of

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CHAP. V. English authors he read chiefly among the Elizabethans, and

Mar.-Nov. 1818. from day to day Mary listened to the poetry of Spenser, and

chosen plays of Beaumont and Fletcher or Shakespeare interpreted by the voice of Shelley. Nor was history quite neglected. Gibbon, as so often before, was still in Shelley's hands. Godwin, led on perhaps from his novel of "Mandeville" to thoughts of a serious historical study of the period which had interested his imagination, had suggested that his daughter should undertake a series of "Lives of the Commonwealth's Men"—Vane, Bradshaw, Milton, Ludlow, Sidney, and others. The needful books were not to be obtained among the ilex groves or chestnut woods of the Baths of Lucca; but Shelley read aloud to his wife from Hume's "History of England," and it may have been these readings which long afterwards led him to contemplate and in some small part achieve an historical drama on the subject of Charles I. "I am exceedingly delighted," he wrote to Godwin (July 25), "with the plan you propose of a book illustrating the character of our calumniated Republicans. It is precisely the subject for Mary; and I imagine that, but for the fear of being excited to refer to books not within her reach, she would attempt to begin it here, and order the works you notice. I am unfortunately little skilled in English history, and the interest which it excites in me is so feeble that I find it a duty to attain merely to that general knowledge of it which is indispensable." It was not possible for Mary, under existing circumstances, to accomplish the work suggested for her by Godwin; but Shelley imagined that the invention and constructive power displayed in "Frankenstein" gave evidence of dramatic talent of no mean order; and for the writer of a dramatic work a great historical library is not indispensable. Accordingly, he now urged Mary to undertake a tragedy of Charles I., and by-and-by his own imagination went to work on her behalf. "Remember, remember 'Charles the First,' and 'Mirra,'" he wrote to her from Padua in

September. "I have been already imagining how you will conduct such scenes. The second volume of 'St. Leon' begins with this proud and true sentiment, 'There is nothing that the human mind can conceive which it may not execute.' Shakespeare was only a human being." The pleading was more that of a lover than a logician; and that inexorable logician, Time, came to demonstrate the difference between aspiration and achievement.

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Shelley's own creative power slumbered. He had come to Italy for health, and had been warned by the physicians in the preceding autumn against the excitement of composition. He still suffered from languor and depression of spirits, which the bright Italian air had not wholly borne away. The suffering in his side was still acute and of frequent recurrence. Had it been possible for him to write with his full powers, it is not improbable that the Hermit of Marlow might have found a prophetic successor in the Hermit of Lucca. England was in the turmoil of a parliamentary election. The interest taken in the contests between the supporters of Government and prominent Whig champions was without a precedent in recent times. For Westminster, the four new members were Whigs. In the north, Brougham stood for Westmoreland, in opposition to Viscount Lowther and his uncle, the Hon. Colonel Lowther. Wordsworth had issued two addresses to the freeholders, urging the claims of the Tory candidates, as men of influence and property, well fitted to sustain that "mellowed feudality" which is the spirit of the English constitution. "No country," wrote the *Quarterly Review*, "was ever in a more combustible state than England is at this moment." When the tale of members was complete, the opponents of the Government were found to have gained in numbers, and with added numbers their spirit and courage rose. Shelley would have been well pleased to raise his voice, and perhaps had he done so we should be in possession of a retort, keen and high-toned, to the manifesto of the elder

CHAP. V. poet of Rydal; but he was happily away under the green leaves and azure skies of Italy, with the soothing voice of the Lima in his ears; and unhappily his strength did not permit the excitement of political controversy. "I wish that I had health or spirits," he wrote to Godwin (July 25), "that would enable me to enter into public affairs, or that I could find words to express all that I feel and know. . . . My health is, I think, better, and I imagine continues to improve; but I still have busy thoughts and dispiriting cares which I would shake off; and now it is summer." His rage against Wordsworth, founded on the one-sided reports received in letters from Peacock, is expressed in words as unmeasured as unjust.\*

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The weeks at the Baths of Lucca, however, were not quite unproductive. Finding himself totally incapable of original composition, Shelley, on the morning of July 9, set himself to render into English the most perfect in form of all the Platonic dialogues. "I am employed just now," he wrote next day to Mr. and Mrs. Gisborne, "having little better to do, in translating into my faint and inefficient periods the divine eloquence of Plato's 'Symposium;' only as an exercise, or, perhaps, to give Mary some idea of the manners and feelings of the Athenians—so different on many subjects from that of any other community that ever existed." Nine or ten mornings completed his work, and in her journal for July 17 Mary notes, "Shelley finishes the translation of the 'Symposium' and reads Herodotus; walks out in the evening to his bath."† From the "Symposium" he proceeded, while

\* Possibly the following fragment (of the year 1818) may refer to Wordsworth:—

"My head is wild with weeping for a grief  
Which is the shadow of a gentle mind.  
I walk into the air (but no relief  
To seek,—or haply, if I sought, to find;  
It came unsought); to wonder that a chief  
Among men's spirits should be cold and blind."

† On July 20, Mary writes, "Shelley finishes correcting the 'Symposium,' and I begin to transcribe it."

Mary was engaged in transcribing his manuscript, to the "Phædrus," but without attempting to render it from the original. His task of a translator had excited him to an effort towards independent authorship. It had been felt by Mrs. Shelley that Plato's conception of love and friendship "in many particulars shocks our present manners." To anticipate and obviate such a shock, Shelley undertook to write "A Discourse on the Manners of the Ancients relative to the Subject of Love." A fragment of this discourse, on a subject to be handled with delicate caution, was in fact written, and remains, but it is no more than the introduction leading up to the special study. The translation of the "Banquet," not always exact in scholarship, has much of the vivid life, the grace of movement, and the luminous beauty of Plato.

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At this moment it seemed to Shelley that in the Periclean age humanity had attained a complete development and an energy of noble life never since approached. Yet the mediæval Italian poets had done much to inform and temper Shelley's mind, and had presented to him a side of historical Christianity which he had not hitherto apprehended. He could now recognize the fact that at least in the abolition of slavery and the elevation of woman the Christian world had gained upon the social and moral status of earlier ages. Through Dante and Petrarch the spiritual power of Catholicism and chivalry reached him, and, becoming sensible of this, he could not value so highly as in former days the services of those who had assailed with criticism or ridicule that outward garb, emblazoned with quaint emblems and devices, arrayed in which the august spirit of the new religion had moved among men. To reconcile Shelley to Christianity, at least in its characteristic sentiment, the "Paradiso" effected more than could have been effected by any number of Short and Easy, or long and difficult, Methods with Deist or Atheist. He admits, in the "Discourse on the Manners of the Ancients," that Dante may be the creator of "imagination of greater loveliness and energy than any that



CHAP. V. are to be found in the ancient literature of Greece." But still  
 Mar.-Nov. the loveliness of Dante's poetry seemed to Shelley to be  
 1818. gathered into fortunate isles, laden with golden fruit, scattered at intervals in "the misty ocean of his dark and extravagant fictions." It was not thus that he wrote of Dante, two and a half years later, in the "Defence of Poetry:" "His apotheosis of Beatrice in Paradise and the gradations of his own love and her loveliness . . . is the most glorious imagination of modern poetry. . . . The Paradise is a perpetual hymn of everlasting love. Love, which found a worthy poet in Plato alone of all the ancients, has been celebrated by a chorus of the greatest writers of the renovated world." The "tender and solemn enthusiasm" of Petrarch, the "delicate moral sensibility" of Tasso, were influences with Shelley teaching him to estimate more justly the destructive work, serviceable as that may in part have been, of Hume, Gibbon, Voltaire, and the French philosophers of the revolutionary age. Alone of the greater Italian poets, Ariosto, whose "Orlando Furioso" he read daily with Mary, pleased him but little. Entertaining and graceful he found Ariosto, entertaining and graceful, and *sometimes* a poet. But where, he asks is the gentle seriousness, the delicate sensibility, the calm and sustained energy, without which true greatness cannot be? In assigning to Ariosto a different and a lower rank from that of his great predecessors, Shelley found support in Leigh Hunt's bright letter to Mary. "Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Dante," writes Hunt, "are the morning, noon, and night of the great Italian day; or rather Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio are the night, morning, and noon. 'And the evening and the morning were the first day.'"

Before leaving London, Shelley had placed a portion of his "Rosalind and Helen," begun at Marlow, in the hands of Ollier, requesting him to send the printed sheets to Peacock for revision. To please Mary, who had liked the poem—her "pretty eclogue"—now in the August days at the Baths of

Lucca he took up his unfinished tale in verse, and quickly carried it to the close. It did not interest the writer profoundly; and sentiment, not quite robust and masculine, saps in upon the passion of the theme, and enfeebles it. Shelley was content if the poem were fitted to "awaken a certain ideal melancholy favourable to the reception of more important impressions." "I have finished," he wrote to Peacock (August 16), "by taking advantage of a few days of inspiration—which the *Camænæ* have been lately very backward in conceding—the little poem I began sending to the press in London. Ollier will send you the proofs. Its structure is slight and aery; its subject ideal. The metre corresponds with the spirit of the poem, and varies with the flow of the feeling." "Rosalind and Helen" was published by Ollier, together with the "Lines written among the Euganean Hills," the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," and the sonnet "Ozymandias," forming but a slender volume, in the spring of 1819.

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While wandering from Milan to Pisa, from Pisa to Leghorn, from Leghorn to Lucca, Claire Clairmont thought longingly of Venice and her beloved Allegra. How did it fare with the little one, away from her mother's arms, under the protection of so strange a father? Allegra was no longer under the same roof with Byron and his motley crew of followers. Mrs. Hoppner, wife of the English Consul-General at Venice, had proposed to Byron to take charge of her, and Byron had given his consent. Letters received from the nurse Elise, on August 14 and 16, seem to have decided Claire to set forth immediately for Venice, with Shelley as companion of her travel, whose part it should be to see Byron and entreat on her behalf for the comfort of at least some brief intercourse with her child. On the day after the reception of Elise's second letter, Shelley and Claire started on their journey, and on August 19 were jolting along in a one-horse cabriolet, over a rough road towards Florence. The heat was considerable, but for Shelley's enjoyment not excessive, and the rickety vehicle seemed to

CHAP. V. have shaken the pain away from his side—a most delightful  
 Mar.-Nov. respite. The country, as they drove, was beautiful with its  
 1318. glories of early autumn—now low-lying lands, where the bunches of purpling grapes hung heavy among vine-festoons; now castled crag, or olive copses, amid which some ruined tower could be half discerned; and again, as Florence drew near, the villa-dotted plain, bounded by blue and misty mountains. “You everywhere meet,” Shelley wrote to Mary next day from Florence, “those teams of beautiful white oxen, which are now labouring the little vine-divided fields with their Virgilian ploughs and carts. Florence itself, that is the Lung’ Arno (for I have seen no more), I think is the most beautiful city I have yet seen. It is surrounded with cultivated hills, and from the bridge which crosses the broad channel of the Arno, the view is the most animated and elegant I ever saw. You see three or four bridges, one apparently supported by Corinthian pillars, and the white sails of the boats, relieved by the deep green of the forest, which comes to the water’s edge, and the sloping hills covered with bright villas on every side. Domes and steeples rise on all sides, and the cleanliness is remarkably great. On the other side there are the foldings of the Vale of Arno above; first the hills of olive and vine, then the chestnut woods, and then the blue and misty pine-forests, which invest the aerial Apennines, that fade in the distance. I have seldom seen a city so lovely at first sight as Florence.”

But the loveliness of Florence did not veil from Shelley the fact that his dearest ones—Mary and William and little Clara—were now at a distance, of which absence he writes to his wife in words whose “tune goes manly:”—“Well, my dearest Mary, are you very lonely? Tell me truth, my sweetest, do you ever cry? I shall hear from you once at Venice, and once on my return here. If you love me you will keep up your spirits—and at all events tell me truth about it; for I assure you I am not of a disposition to be flattered by

your sorrow, though I should be by your cheerfulness ; and above all, by seeing such fruits of my absence as were produced when we were at Geneva.\* . . . How is Willmouse and little Ca ? † They must be kissed for me ; and you must particularly remember to speak my name to William, and see that he does not quite forget me before I return. Adieu, my dearest girl ! I think we shall soon meet. I shall write again from Venice. Adieu, dear Mary.”

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Paolo, the Italian servant, had accompanied Shelley and Claire as far as Florence, and with his assistance a satisfactory bargain was made for conveyance in a comfortable carriage, drawn by two mules, as far as Padua. The economy which might have been effected by making a German traveller one of the party was declined ; he had just come from Rome, and was scarcely recovered from malaria fever. Claire entreated Shelley to run no risks, and he knew that, were Mary present, she would have laid her mandates of prudence upon him. After a breakfast, made exquisite with bloom-cheeked peaches, “whose smell was like what one fancies of the wakening of Paradise flowers,” the travellers were once more upon the road. While they drove there was debate as to the wisest methods of approaching Byron, and attaining, if possible, the object of their journey. “Claire’s plans with regard to Albè,” Shelley had written to Mary from Florence, ‡ “have undergone a good deal of modification, and her present impression is that I should call on Albè whilst she remains either at Fusina or Padua, so as not to irritate him by entering the same city, but not to conceal—and there I think she is right—her having departed from Lucca. The worst of this plan is, that it will not succeed, and that she will never be quite satisfied that all has been done. But we shall see.” On reaching Padua, how-

\* i.e. “Frankenstein.”

† Clara.

‡ This passage of the letter to Mrs. Shelley, dated August 20, 1818, occurs at the point near the opening, where Mrs. Shelley has indicated by asterisks an omission.

CHAP. V. ever, Claire could not bear to be left behind, full of eager and irrepressible anxiety, in a strange city. "Claire changed her plan of remaining at Padua," Shelley wrote on arriving at Venice, "partly from the badness of the beds, which indeed are full of those insects inexpressible by Italian delicacy, and partly from the strangeness and solitude of the place. At present, I believe that I shall call on the Albaneser with a letter from her, and without any direct interference on my own part. He will not be up yet, and the interval she proposes to employ in a visit to Mrs. Hoppner. All this casts, as you see, 'ominous conjecture on the whole success.'" From Padua, on the afternoon of Saturday, August 22, the travellers proceeded by water to Venice; a boat was always more delightful in Shelley's eyes than a carriage; and a gondola, seen for the first time, seemed to him the most beautiful and convenient boat in the world. The weather had grown extremely, even painfully cold, and we hear no raptures uttered by Shelley in presence of the banks of the Brenta, Palladian villas, gay gardens, and views of the Rhætian Alps. The cold August twilight fell upon him and his companion, housed in their black-garmented gondola, listening to the plash of the waters, or the talk of their boatman, who, by curious chance, was one of Byron's gondolieri, and entertained them with unedifying tales of the *giovannotto Inglese*. A famous man he was, who lived so luxuriously, spent great sums of money, owned a *nome stravagante*, and had lately received "two of his daughters over from England," of whom one, said the narrator, with, perhaps, an incredulous smile, "looked nearly as old as himself."\* The approach to Venice was in no golden sunset, such as voyagers love to describe, with the lagoon showing its "leagues of rippling lustre," and the enchanted city rising like a gorgeous exhalation from the bosom of ocean. "We passed the lagoon," Shelley wrote next morning to his wife, "in the middle of the night, in a most violent

\* Shelley to Mary: Venice, Sunday morning [August 23].

storm of wind, rain, and lightning. It was very curious to observe the elements above in a state of such tremendous convulsion, and the surface of the water almost calm; for these lagunas, though five miles broad, a space enough in a storm to sink any gondola, are so shallow that the boatmen drive the boat along with a pole. The sea-water, furiously agitated by the wind, shone with sparkles like stars. Venice, now hidden and now disclosed by the driving rain, shone dimly with its lights. We were all this while safe and comfortable, except that Claire was now and then a little frightened in our cabin." It was midnight when they reached their hotel.

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On Sunday morning, again at late night, or rather towards the dawn of the following day, and "by scraps and patches, interrupted every minute," on Monday, Shelley continued to write to his wife a detailed account of his doings in Venice. From that portion of the letter—unhappily but a fragment—dated "Sunday night, five o'clock in the morning," so many passages of interest have been hitherto omitted in the printed collections, that it is right to reproduce it here as little imperfectly as may be.

"Well, I will try to relate everything in its order. After breakfast we took a gondola, and went to the Hoppners'. Claire went in first, and I, who had no idea of calling, sate in the gondola. Soon a servant came down, and requested me to go upstairs. I found Mr. Hoppner and Claire, and soon after Mrs. Hoppner, a most agreeable and amiable lady, who instantly paid Claire the kindest attentions. They received me with great politeness, and expressed the greatest interest in the event of our journey. Soon after—for Mrs. Hoppner sent for them instantly—came Elise and little Ba, so grown you would hardly know her; she is pale, and has lost a good deal of her liveliness, but is as beautiful as ever, though more mild. The account which they gave of Albè unfortunately corresponds too justly with most of what we have heard, though doubtless with some exaggeration. We discussed a long time

CHAP. V. the mode in which I had better proceed with him, and at length determined that Claire's being there should be concealed, as Mr. Hoppner says that he often expresses his extreme horror of her arrival, and the necessity which it would impose on him of instantly quitting Venice. The Hoppners enter into all this as if it were their own dearest concern. At three o'clock I called on Albè; he was delighted to see me, and our first conversation of course consisted in the object of my visit. The success of this is yet doubtful, though certainly the spirit in which he receives the request, and the anxiety he shows to satisfy us and Claire, is very unexpected. He says he does not like her [Allegra] going away to Florence for so long a time, because the Venetians will think that he has grown tired of her and dismissed her; and he has already the reputation of caprice. Then he said, 'Why, Claire will be as unwilling to part with her again as she is to be absent from her now, and there will be a second renewal of affliction and a second parting. But, if you like, she shall go to Claire to Padua for a week' (when he said this he supposed that you and the family were there); 'and in fact,' said he, 'after all, I have no right over the child. If Claire likes to take it, let her take it. I do not say what most people would in that situation, that I will refuse to provide for it, or abandon it, if she does this; but she must surely be aware herself how very imprudent such a measure would be.' Well, dear Mary, this talk went off, for I did not see in that moment how I could urge it further; and I thought that at least many points were gained in the willingness and good humour of our discussion. So he took me in his gondola—much against my will, for I wanted to return to Claire at Mrs. Hoppner's, who was anxiously waiting for me—across the laguna, to a long sandy island which defends Venice from the Adriatic.\* When we

\* The Lido. See Byron's letter to Moore, dated "Venice, February 2, 1818," and the account which follows, in Moore's "Life of Byron," of the rides on the Lido.

disembarked, we found his horses waiting for us, and we rode CHAP. V.  
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1818. along the sands of the sea, talking. Our conversation consisted in histories of his wounded feelings, and questions as to my affairs, and great professions of friendship and regard for me. He said that, if he had been in England at the time of the Chancery affair, he would have moved heaven and earth to have prevented such a decision. We talked of literary matters; his fourth canto [of 'Childe Harold'], which he says is very good, and indeed repeated some stanzas of great energy to me; and 'Foliage,'\* which he quizzes immoderately. When we returned to his palace, which† . . . [The Hoppners are the] most amiable people I ever knew. Do you know that they have put off a journey of pleasure solely that they might devote themselves to this affair, and all with so much ease, delicacy, tenderness! They are much attached to each other, and have a nice little boy, seven months old. Mr. Hoppner paints beautifully; and this excursion, which he has just put off, was an expedition to the Julian Alps, in the neighbourhood, for the sake of sketching, to procure winter employment. He has only a fortnight's leisure, and he has sacrificed two days to strangers whom he never saw before. Mrs. Hoppner has hazel eyes and sweet looks—rather Maryish."

Led to believe that Mrs. Shelley, with her children and Claire, were now at Padua, Byron in a friendly mood proposed that Shelley and his household should occupy for a time the villa at Este, which he had himself taken for two years as a place of *villeggiatura*. It was beautifully situated among the Euganean Hills, close to the old castle of the Este family, and within a few miles of Arquà, where Petrarch dwelt and died.‡ Here Claire might welcome Allegra, and for a time enjoy companionship with her child. Such a proposal Shelley,

\* Leigh Hunt's volume of verse.

† The letter is here torn.

‡ The house had been transferred from Mr. Hoppner. See Byron's letter to Rogers, dated "Venice, March 3, 1818."



CHAP. V. well pleased to have attained the object of his journey, could  
 Mar.—Nov. not but accept. He wrote without delay to Mary, begging  
 1818. her to come instantly to Este, and adding minute and exact instructions for her guidance on the journey. “I have been obliged,” he says, “to decide on all these things without you. I have done for the best; and, my own beloved Mary, you must soon come and scold me if I have done wrong, and kiss me if I have done right, for I am sure I do not know which, and it is only the event that will show. We shall at least be saved the trouble of introduction, and have formed acquaintance with a lady [Mrs. Hoppner] who is so good, so beautiful, so angelically mild, that, were she as wise too, she would be quite a Mary; but she is not very accomplished. Her eyes are like a reflection of yours; her manners are like yours when you know and like a person. . . . If you knew all that I had to do! Dearest love, be well, be happy; come to me and confide in your own constant and affectionate P. B. S. Kiss the blue-eyed darlings for me, and do not let William forget me. Ca cannot recollect me.”

Mrs. Shelley, in her loneliness at the Baths, had invited Mr. and Mrs. Gisborne to be her guests, and on August 25 they had arrived. But, on receiving Shelley's letter and consulting with her friends, she decided, in accordance with her instructions, to set forth immediately for Este. Her birthday, August 30, was a day of bustle and packing; next morning she was off, with Paolo acting as her courier and attendant. Shelley waited anxiously at Este, and wondered when the hours passed and no Mary appeared. It was perhaps during these lonely days of the opening of the month that Shelley's longing for the beloved presence of her who was his dearest friend uttered themselves in a fragment of musical verse, dated “Este, September, 1818”—

“O Mary dear, that you were here!  
 With your brown eyes bright and clear—

And your sweet voice like a bird  
 Singing love to its lone mate  
 In the ivy-bower disconsolate;  
 Voice the sweetest ever heard.

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Mary dear, come to me soon!  
 I am not well whilst thou art far.  
 As sunset to the sphered moon,  
 As twilight to the western star,  
 Thou, beloved, art to me."

Mary's journey had, indeed, been neither rapid nor agreeable. At Florence she was detained an entire day, while waiting for a signature to her passport. Little Clara, in whose baby-face Mary discerned a remarkable likeness to Shelley, suffered from an attack of dysentery, caused by heat, fatigue, and the troubles of teething, and when they reached Este she was dangerously ill. The physician at Este was a stupid fellow; the Paduan physician, a man in great practice, was not one in whom Shelley placed entire confidence. The days went on, and the babe, although the dysentery had been in part subdued, was still in a frightful state of weakness and fever. Miss Clairmont was far from well, and on September 22 Shelley accompanied her to Padua to call upon the *medico*; but the *medico* was not to be seen. Claire waited at Padua in order to visit her physician next morning, after which she returned to Mary. Shelley, in accordance with his wife's wishes, but sooner than she had expected, proceeded to Venice ("Am I not like a wild swan to be gone so suddenly?" he asks), there intending to make arrangements for receiving Mary and little Ca. "My poor little Clara," he wrote, "how is she to-day? Indeed I am somewhat uneasy about her, and, though I feel secure that there is no danger, it would be very comfortable to have some reasonable person's advice about her."\* Shelley's trust that the danger was past changed

\* To Mrs. Shelley: Padua, September 22, 1818. In this letter Shelley refers to a possible journey alone "through that wild cold France." It seems as if he

CHAP. V. two days after to the sad assurance that all suffering for her, and all anxieties of hope and fear for her parents, were at an end. On September 24 Mary, with Claire and the one-year-old baby, drove to Padua, where they were met by Shelley. Claire returned to Este to watch over William and Allegra. Shelley, with his wife and child, hastened forward towards Venice. At Fusina a halt was necessary; there stood the great dogana, "like a prison on the edge of the Adriatic, filled with German faces and guarded by Austrian arms."\* In their trouble and hurry the travellers had neglected to bring their passport with them. The soldiers on duty attempted to prevent their crossing the lagoon; "but," writes Mary, "they could not resist Shelley's impetuosity at such a moment." It was a time of miserable anxiety for father and mother in the gondola, while every minute the babe grew more alarmingly ill. The inn was at length reached, but within an hour or two the child lay dead in its mother's arms.

*Mary's Journal.*

"*Thursday, September 24.*—This is the journal of misfortunes. Shelley writes; he reads 'Œdipus Tyrannus' to me. On Tuesday, September 22, he goes to Venice. On Thursday I go to Padua with Claire; meet Shelley there. We go to Venice with my poor Clara, who dies the moment we get there. Mr. Hoppner comes, and takes us away from the inn to his house.

"*Friday, September 25.*—Remain at the Hoppners'. Shelley calls on Lord Byron. He reads the fourth canto of 'Childe Harold.'"

*Shelley to Claire Clairmont.*

Mrs. Hoppner's, Friday [September 25].

MY DEAR CLAIRE,

We arrived at Venice yesterday about five o'clock. Our little girl had shown symptoms of increased weakness, and even had had news from England which led him to expect his father's death. He adds, "But we shall see. As yet I do not direct to you *Lady Shelley*."

\* Lady Morgan's description in her "Italy," iii. p. 361.

convulsive motions of the mouth and eyes, which made me anxious to see the physician. As she past from Fusina to the Inn she became worse. I left her on landing, and took a gondola for Dr. Alietti.\* He was not at home. When I returned, I found Mary in the hall of the Inn in the most dreadful distress. Worse symptoms had appeared. Another physician had arrived. He told me there was no hope. In about an hour—how shall I tell you?—she died—silently, without pain; and she is now buried.†

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The Hoppners instantly came and took us to their house, a kindness I should have hesitated to accept, but that this unexpected stroke reduced Mary to a kind of despair. She is better to-day.

I have sent a message to Albè to say that I cannot see him to-day, unless he will call here.‡ Mary means to try and persuade him to let Allegra stay. All this is miserable enough—is it not? but must be borne [one line is here erased]. And above all, my dear girl, take care of yourself.

Your affectionate friend,

P. B. S.

With characteristic resolution Mary opposed herself to the sapping in of despondency, and on Sunday she called on Byron, probably to plead on Claire's behalf for a longer visit from Allegra. The journal briefly recounts the incidents of these days in Venice; no word of unavailing sorrow is permitted to escape the writer's pen.

"*Saturday, September 26.*—An idle day. Go to the Lido, and see Albè there.

"*Sunday, September 27.*—Read fourth canto of 'Childe Harold.' It rains. Go to the Doge's palace, Ponte dei Sospiri, etc. Go to the Academy with Mr. and Mrs. Hoppner, and

\* A notice of Dr. Aglietti will be found in Valéry's "Travels in Italy," p. 161 (Paris, 1839). He died, aged seventy-nine, in May, 1836.

† In her poem, "The Choice," written soon after Shelley's death, Mary speaks of this sorrow—

"A happy Mother first I saw this sun,  
Beneath this sky my race of joy was run,  
First, my sweet girl, whose face resembled *his*,  
Slept on bleak Lido, near Venetian seas."

‡ Later in the day Shelley summoned up resolution and called on Byron.

CHAP. V. see some fine pictures. Call at Lord Byron's and see the

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"*Monday, September 28.*—Go with Mrs. Hoppner and Cavaliere Mengaldo to the Library. Shopping. In the evening Lord Byron calls.

"*Tuesday, September 29.*—Leave Venice and arrive at Este at night. Claire is gone with the children [William and Allegra] to Padua.

"*Wednesday, September 30.*—The chicks return. Transcribe 'Mazeppa.' Go to the Opera in the evening."

There was something in Mrs. Shelley of her father's desire for temperance of emotion. "I sincerely sympathize with you," Godwin wrote, "in the affliction which forms the subject of your letter, and which I may consider as the first severe trial of your constancy and the firmness of your temper that has occurred to you in the course of your life. You should, however, recollect that it is only persons of a very ordinary sort, and of a pusillanimous disposition, that sink long under a calamity of this nature. I assure you such a recollection will be of great use to you. We seldom indulge long in depression and mourning, except when we think secretly that there is something very refined in it, and that it does us honour."† An excellent piece of philosophy against the self-indulgence of grief; but what if grief be no friend, but a foe, and clutching the heart will not relax its hold?

The early days of October were spent somewhat sadly at the villa among the hills. "We have all had bad spirits enough," Shelley wrote to Peacock (October 8), "and I, in addition, bad health. I *intend* to be better soon: there is no malady, bodily or mental, which does not either kill or is killed." If delightful surroundings could make life pleasant, the autumn days might have been a season of content for the occupants of I Cappuccini. The house was cheerful, with a vine-trellised walk leading from the hall-door to the summer-

\* Margarita Cogni.

† Skinner Street, October 27, 1818.

house at the end of the garden, which Shelley made his study. CHAP. V.  
 A slight ravine, with a road in its depth, divided the garden Mar.-Nov. 1818.  
 from the hill, on which stood the ruins of the ancient castle of Este, of which the dark and echoing wall harboured in its crevices owls and bats until twilight and moonrise called them into activity.\* "We looked from the garden," writes Mrs. Shelley, "over the wide plain of Lombardy, bounded to the west by the far Apennines, while to the east the horizon was lost in misty distance. After the picturesque but limited view of mountain, ravine, and chestnut wood at the Baths of Lucca, there was something infinitely gratifying to the eye in the wide range of prospect commanded by our new abode." This delight in wide prospect finds vivid and exquisite expression in a poem of Shelley's written in the main at Este, retouched and completed at Naples, which tells of a sudden access of unlooked-for joy among the hills—joy ringed around at morning and evening with a leaden band of pain too heavy to be removed.† The "Lines written among the Euganean Hills" have in them the purified gladness in sorrow of an autumnal day upon the heights—a day measured from sunrise to the hour of the climbing crescent moon, with her one ministering star. Below lies spread like a green sea

"The waveless plain of Lombardy,"

with Venice eastward, girdled with the glory of the sun, yet dark in its decay and servitude; and Padua with all her domes—

"A peopled solitude  
 Mid the harvest-shining plain,  
 Where the peasant heaps his grain  
 In the garner of his foe."

\* Mrs. Shelley's note on "Julian and Maddalo." Compare Shelley's

"O Mary dear, that you were here!  
 The castle echo answers, 'Here.'"

† Medwin, in a manuscript note in Mr. Dykes Campbell's copy of his "Life of Shelley," writes of the "Lines written among the Euganean Hills," "It was at I Cappuccini that he etched though it appears that he did not complete the poem till his stay at Naples." Perhaps this statement is founded on the fact that Shelley did not send the poem to Ollier until after his arrival at Naples.

CHAP. V. Amid the many memories of perished Venice, none will be  
 Mar.-Nov. more sublime than that she once gave shelter to the exile  
 1818. Byron—

“ A tempest-cleaving swan  
 Of the songs of Albion  
 Driven from his ancestral streams.”\*

Thus with finest raptures of the senses and the imagination  
 the autumn hours go by, until evening descends upon the hills,

“ And the soft dreams of the morn  
 (Which like winged winds had borne,  
 To that silent isle which lies  
 Mid remembered agonies,  
 The frail bark of this lone being)  
 Pass to other sufferers fleeing;  
 And its ancient pilot, Pain,  
 Sits beside the helm again.”

But Shelley's last word, after such a day, must be not of pain, but hope. The bright autumnal day has been a pledge and promise of a better season of calm happiness for himself and those most dear to him, and even for all mankind, when the aged earth with her many woes shall cast away her weakness and her shame, and grow young again in the light of love.

The memories of his recent visit to Venice dwelt with Shelley, and were food for his imagination. Ailing in body and depressed in spirits, he was driven to poetry as to a world in which life, finer and more intense, was still possible for him; and Venice and Byron became for his imagination vivid centres around which that higher life might gather. His first impressions of Byron were favourable, for Byron had presented his friendliest and most cheerful aspect to Shelley. “I saw Lord Byron,” he wrote to Peacock (October 8), “and really hardly knew him again; he is changed into the liveliest and

\* The passage about Byron “seems to have been an after-thought.” Mr. Frederic Locker possesses a copy of “*Rosalind and Helen*,” etc., “containing the manuscript interpolation sent after the poem had gone to the publisher” (Mr. Forman's note in his edition of Shelley's Poetical Works).

happiest-looking man I ever met. He read me the first canto of his 'Don Juan'—a thing in the style of Beppo, but infinitely better, and dedicated to Southey, in ten or a dozen stanzas, more like a mixture of wormwood and verdigris than satire." And of Venice, "Venice is a wonderfully fine city. The approach to it over the laguna, with its domes and turrets glittering in a long line over the blue waves, is one of the finest architectural delusions in the world. It seems to have—and literally it has—its foundations in the sea. The silent streets are paved with water, and you hear nothing but the dashing of the oars and the occasional cries of the gondolieri. I heard nothing of Tasso. The gondolas themselves are things of a most romantic and picturesque appearance; I can only compare them to moths of which a coffin might have been the chrysalis." A mournful image, but which might well have suited the boat that bore the baby Clara to her grave.

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On October 12, Shelley, with his wife and little William, now attended by the nurse Elise, were again in Venice. Mrs. Shelley spent much of her time with the Hoppners. Shelley passed several evenings with Byron at his palazzo on the Grand Canal. It is probable that during these days Shelley saw more of the life led by Byron at this period, and of the ruin which it was working in his character, than had been visible to him during the first dim days of sorrow after Clara's death. As Shelley conceived, the spirit of Byron's poetry was being degraded and dragged into the mire by his habits of coarse self-indulgence, and the cynicism and apathy in which they resulted. The pseudo-sublime in "Childe Harold's" melancholy was, in fact, an expression of the dull distaste for life which succeeded to vulgar orgies of sensuality. "I remonstrated with him in vain," Shelley wrote to Peacock a few weeks later, "on the tone of mind from which such a view of things alone arises. . . . The fact is that, first, the Italian women with whom he associates are



CHAP. V. perhaps the most contemptible of all who exist under the moon—the most ignorant, the most disgusting, the most bigoted; countesses smell so strongly of garlic that an ordinary Englishman cannot approach them. Well, L. B. is familiar with the lowest sort of these women, the people his gondolieri pick up in the streets. He associates with wretches who seem almost to have lost the gait and physiognomy of man, and who do not scruple to avow practices which are not only not named, but I believe seldom even conceived, in England. He says he disapproves, but he endures. He is heartily and deeply discontented with himself; and contemplating in the distorted mirror of his own thoughts the nature and the destiny of man, what can he behold but objects of contempt and despair? But that he is a great poet, I think the address to ocean proves. And he has a certain degree of candour while you talk to him, but unfortunately it does not outlast your departure. No, I do not doubt, and for his sake I ought not to hope, that his present career must end soon in some violent circumstance.\* And to the care of such a father the little Allegra must be confided!

Such was the real Byron as he showed himself at this time to Shelley—a “tempest-cleaving swan,” paddling in the foulest mire. In “Julian and Maddalo,” written in the summer-house at Este, perhaps in the interval between Shelley’s first visit to Venice and the death of Clara, a portrait of Byron is given without those baser lines and darker colours which were perceived only during the later days of their intercourse in the autumn of 1818. The poem is no less interesting for the sake of its idealized portrait of Shelley himself—“an Englishman of good family”—so Julian is described in the preface—“passionately attached to those philosophical notions which assert the power of man over his own mind, and the immense improvements of which, by the extinction of certain moral superstitions, human society may be susceptible. Without

\* To Peacock: Naples, December 22, 1818.

concealing the evil in the world, he is for ever speculating CHAP. V.  
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1818. how good may be made superior. He is a complete infidel, and a scoffer at all things reputed holy. . . . Julian, in spite of his heterodox opinions, is conjectured by his friends to possess some good qualities." The ride with Byron on the Lido, the sunset seen from the water's edge or the gondola's covert, with Venice appearing like a city of enchantment, its temples and palaces piled to heaven, the picture of Allegra's beautiful childhood—

"A lovelier toy sweet Nature never made;  
A serious, subtle, wild, yet gentle being;  
Graceful without design, and unforeseeing"—

the approach through the fast-falling rain and high-wrought seas to the dreary island of the bell and tower,—these are probably recasts made by the imagination from material supplied by the remembrance of Shelley's earliest days at Venice.\* Never before had he written with such an union of freedom, strength, and grace as the earlier pages of this poem show. The excess of unbalanced sensibility, not usually a characteristic of the greatest poets, and too often a source of weakness in Shelley's writings, is here in large measure checked and controlled by the variety of the material handled, and by the vigour of his adult genius. Two of the three principal portraits are drawn from life, and are drawn with the greater strength because the originals were immediately present to his mind; the third—a fainter and feebler sketch—that of the wronged and distracted lover, is also, says Shelley, "in some degree a painting from nature, but with respect to time and place ideal." We cannot guess in this instance of what original the painting presents an idealization.

Admirable, at least in part, as "Julian and Maddalo" is in conception and execution, a fortunate product of some autumn days among the hills, it seemed to Shelley but a slight

\* Allegra, according to Mr. Hoppner (*Athenæum*, 1869), was not an amiable child.

CHAP. V. achievement, such as might be suitable for insertion in Leigh Mar.-Nov. 1818. Hunt's *Examiner*. Another and a more arduous enterprise in poetry engaged his highest thoughts. During his early wanderings in Italy, Shelley meditated three subjects as the groundwork for lyrical dramas. One was the madness of Tasso, to the treatment of which theme he had intended to devote the summer of 1818, and, indeed, the following year. If properly treated, it would be found, he believed, admirably dramatic and poetical. "But you will say," he had written from Milan to Peacock, "I have no dramatic talent; very true, in a certain sense; but I have taken the resolution to see what kind of a tragedy a person without dramatic talent could write." The design was never executed, and the only fragments of the tragedy of Tasso which we possess are a short scene and an unfinished song. It may be, however, that some of Shelley's studies for the madness of Tasso overflowed into the mournful soliloquies of the distraught lover and lunatic in "Julian and Maddalo."\* A second theme, more suitable for lyrical drama, was found in the Book of Job—itself, as Shelley conceived it, a dramatic poem of "irresistible grandeur" in its plan, and unequalled sublimity in its imagery. This design Shelley never abandoned in idea; no trace, however, of an independent drama, suggested by the most majestic of the Hebrew writings, remains among his papers. In 1821, when engaged upon his lyrical drama of "Hellas," Shelley reverted in thought to his project of three years earlier, and wrote those noble fragments of a prologue to "Hellas," deciphered by the piety of Mr. Garnett, in which the scene is the roofless senate-house of God whose floor is Chaos, and the speakers are the angelic herald of Eternity, the Christ, and Satan standing, as does the Adversary in the Book of Job, among the sons of God. It was a bold design to ally the genius of Hebraism with that

\* Mr. Garnett conjectures that Shelley was withheld from attempting "Tasso" by the appearance of Byron's "Lament of Tasso," and his reluctance to enter into competition with one to whose genius he assigned a pre-eminence over his own.

of Hellenism, and to present Christ as pleading "by Plato's sacred light" on behalf of revolutionary Greece.

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The third of Shelley's great enterprises of the early months in Italy was his "Prometheus Unbound." "The Greek tragedians," writes Mrs. Shelley, "were now his most familiar companions in his wanderings, and the sublime majesty of Æschylus filled him with wonder and delight." The "Prometheus Vincit" of Æschylus was connected with a lost play of its author, "Prometheus Unbound," in which a chorus of Titans condole with the hero, who was delivered by Heracles and reconciled with Zeus.\* That such a play had existed, Shelley vaguely remembered, and no more. During all his wanderings from Milan to Como, and thence to Pisa, Leghorn, the Baths of Lucca, Venice, he meditated the subject of his drama. Immediately on arriving at the villa at Este, although ailing in health and full of anxiety for his child, he set himself to his delighted task. "Arrive at Este," Mary enters in her journal. "Poor Clara is dangerously ill. Shelley is very unwell, from taking poison in Italian cakes. He writes his drama of 'Prometheus.'"† And there, in the summer-house at the end of the vine-trellised walk, the first act of the drama was completed, or almost completed, by the early days of October. In the narrow covert of the arbour, thoughts and visions came and went of Michelangesque sublimity, and of tenderness as exquisite as that of the great Florentine. The martyrdom of a heroic lover and saviour of mankind was a theme around which Shelley's highest and purest feelings and imaginings must gather; and for him such a martyrdom must needs be the pledge of the final victory of joy and wisdom and love.‡

\* Mahaffy's "History of Greek Literature," i. p. 258.

† The entry is headed September 5; but it may have been made at any time between that date and September 16.

‡ While writing the first act of "Prometheus Unbound," Shelley read a French translation of Malthus. There was for him no opposition between high poetry and any study which concerned the hopes and destiny of mankind.

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When, after a visit of twelve days, Shelley, on October 24, left Venice for Este, his spirit, in anticipation of wintry days, was already turning towards the south. At the Baths of Lucca, when little Clara as well as William was to be thought of, high debate had been held as to whether the land or sea journey to Naples would be the safer and the more agreeable. "I cannot express to you," Mary had written to Mrs. Gisborne, "how I fear a storm at sea with two such young children as William and Clara. Do you know the periods when the Mediterranean is troubled, and when the wintry halcyon days come?" Now November was not far off, and the time for their departure had almost arrived. Allegra must be re-delivered to her father, and, with the purpose of escorting her to Venice, Shelley had returned to the country villa. Very bitter for Claire Clairmont's spirits must have been the parting from her beloved child. On October 29, Shelley, with Allegra, was again in Venice. Next morning farewells were said, and after a few days of rest at Este and preparation for renewed wayfaring, the travellers, who had decided in favour of the land journey to the south, were (November 5) on the road to Rovigo.

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## CHAPTER VI.

ROME AND SOUTHERN ITALY (NOVEMBER, 1818, TO JUNE, 1819).

UNDER grey clouds, along roads so bad that oxen were sometimes needed to assist the horses, the carriage, with its six occupants—Shelley, Mary, Claire, Elise, with little William, the maid Milly, and Paolo as driver—struggled slowly towards Ferrara. The cloudy skies, the reddened leaves that hung from the vines, the piled stalks of Indian corn around the threshing-floors, the vast heaps of many-coloured pumpkins—winter food for the hogs—stored in the farmyards, told of the late season of the year. In the level lands through which they passed nothing seemed to Shelley so beautiful as the “milk-white oxen” which he had described in his “Lines written among the Euganean Hills,” and which were to be seen at labour or in repose in lovely teams or troops. The November evening which brought the travellers to Ferrara was followed by a night of rain and thunder; but the weather next day permitted them to drive through the desolate and grass-grown streets to visit the cathedral, the public library, and the Hospital of St. Anna.\* The manuscripts and relics of Ariosto and Tasso in particular deeply interested Shelley. There were Ariosto’s bronze inkstand, with its Cupid commanding silence, and his walnut arm-chair, in which Shelley could imagine he saw the poet seated; there were his satires in his

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\* The dates of Shelley’s letter from Ferrara, November 8 and 9, must be incorrect. The journal shows that the true dates are November 6 and 7.

CHAP. VI. own handwriting; and there the "Gerusalemme Liberata,"  
 Nov. 1818—copied and re-copied and interlined by its author. With  
 June, 1819. emotion which left no room for historical scepticism, Shelley  
 viewed the narrow dungeon of Tasso—hero of the intended  
 lyrical drama—and to Peacock was despatched, as a memorial  
 of the visit, "a piece of the wood of the very door, which for  
 seven years and three months divided this glorious being from  
 the light and air, which had nourished in him those influences  
 which he has communicated, through his poetry, to thousands."  
 On November 8, amid falling rain, through dull and marshy  
 lands, the carriage rolled towards Bologna. In 1818, the fame  
 of the Bolognese school of painting stood higher than it does  
 to-day, and Shelley devoted himself very zealously during  
 two visits to the Academy of Fine Arts to mastering at least  
 the subjects and motives of the chief pictures—for he did not  
 aspire to connoisseurship or the criticism of *technique*—until  
 some of that fatigue and bewilderment came down upon him,  
 which must oppress any but the most stalwart sight-seer  
 among Italian galleries and cathedrals. "I have seen a  
 quantity of things here," he wrote to Peacock—"churches,  
 palaces, statues, fountains, and pictures; and my brain is at  
 this moment like a portfolio of an architect or a print-shop,  
 or a commonplace book." But even at Bologna the Caracci  
 and Domenichino did not win the admiration of Shelley. "Re-  
 member," he says apologetically, "I do not pretend to taste."  
 Before all else the St. Cecilia of Raphael delighted him, "her  
 countenance, as it were, calmed by the depth of its passion and  
 rapture, and penetrated throughout with the warm and radiant  
 light of life." Such a picture as this enabled him to feel some  
 of the sacred humanities of Christian art, while the austerities  
 and self-macerations of countless saints could only draw from  
 him the reflection, "Why write books against religion when  
 we may hang up such pictures?" For Guido's "Fortune"  
 and "Samson," and his "Murder of the Innocents," Shelley  
 had all the enthusiasm expected by the guide-books and

ciceroni of his time; and it may be that the sympathetic spirit in which he endeavours to educe the meaning of a work of art tends more to true culture, even when the work be not of the highest quality, than a supercilious knowledge uninspired by love. A "Madonna suckling" of Guido appeared to him especially full of truth and nature. "There is what an unfeeling observer would call a dulness in the expression of her face; her eyes are almost closed; her lip depressed; there is a serious, and even a heavy relaxation, as it were, of all the muscles which are called into action by ordinary emotions; but it is only as if the spirit of love, almost insupportable from its intensity, were brooding over and weighing down the soul, or whatever it is, without which the material frame is inanimate and inexpressive." One who studies the objects placed before him in the spirit in which this criticism is written is certainly on the way to discover, before he has done, all that is deepest and most human in art.\*

A visit on horseback to the church of the Madonna di San Luca, on Mount Guardia, whence Shelley looked forth on the city, the fertile plains, and the many-folded Apennines, and a moonlight ramble through arcades and colonnades, and by church and palace and tower, completed his studies and recreation at Bologna. Passing by Faenza and Cesena, the travellers followed the beautiful coast-road from Rimini to Fano, whence they turned inland, winding among the Apennines in a south-westerly direction. "Sleep, or do not sleep," writes Mary in her journal (November 14), "for we do not undress, at a miserable inn at Fossombrone." But next day made amends, when, pursuing the course of the Metaurus, through forests of oak and ilex which overhang the emerald stream, an opening in the woods, and in the low-hanging clouds struck by the clear north wind, revealed "heaven-cleaving pinnacles and black crags overhanging one another," with the

\* A Christ beatified of Correggio, and the paintings of Marcantonio Franceschini, were among those admired by Shelley at Bologna.



CHAP. VI. torrent foaming and struggling below. "The scene," writes Mary in the journal, "is fine and Promethean, but not so fine, Nov. 1818–  
June, 1819. I think, as Les Echelles in Savoy." At Spoleto—most romantic of cities—the aqueduct spanning the vale, in view of the ramparted citadel, was duly visited. "I never saw," said Shelley, "a more impressive picture, in which the shapes of nature are of the grandest order, and over which the creations of man, sublime from their antiquity and greatness, seem to predominate." But upon this journey marvel succeeded marvel, scarcely leaving breathing-time to the spectator. In a letter to Peacock, Shelley has attempted the impossible in his effort to depict in words the wonder and beauty and terror of the falls of the Velino at Terni.\* We shall content ourselves with the less ambitious entries in Mary's journal, and let these entries serve for a record of the travellers' passage of the Campagna—a place infinitely to Shelley's taste, a kind of glorified Bagshot Heath—and their entry of Rome with no exultant feeling under the chill November rain.

*Mary Shelley's Journal.*

"*Wednesday, November 18.*—We sleep at Terni. Visit the celebrated waterfall, first from below, where we see it as a fine painting; and afterwards from above, where it is more beautiful than any painting—the thunder, the abyss, the spray, the graceful dash of water lost in the mist below. It put me in mind of Sappho leaping from a rock, and her form vanishing as in the shape of a swan in the distance. As we return home we behold Venus brighter, and nearly as large, as the moon in her first quarter.

"*Thursday, November 19.*—We wind among the Apennines; and in the evening the scenery is beautifully wooded. Sleep at Nepi.

\* The passage may be compared with Byron's stanzas in "Childe Harold," and with Mr. Ruskin's celebrated description of the falls of the Rhine at Schaffhausen.

"*Friday, November 20.*—We travel all day the Campagna CHAP. VI.  
 di Roma—a perfect solitude, yet picturesque, and relieved by Nov. 1818–  
 shady dells. We see an immense hawk sailing in the air for June, 1819.  
 prey. Enter Rome. A rainy evening. Doganas and cheating innkeepers. We at length get settled in a comfortable hotel."

It was late November ; but November in Rome is not like the month of mists in London. Day followed day of clear and sunny weather, and with unbounded ardour Shelley gave himself up to the spectacle and the influencings of the majestic city. "The impression of it," he wrote to Peacock, "exceeds anything I have ever experienced in my travels." In the first enthusiasm of his recognition of ancient time, the modern city disappeared from view, and he saw nothing of the Italians. "Rome," he writes, "is a city, as it were, of the dead, or rather of those who cannot die, and who survive the puny generations which inhabit and pass over the spot which they have made sacred to eternity." More impressive than any other object within the circuit of its vast and antique walls was the crumbling yet majestic Coliseum, which benignant Nature, scarcely mindful of the company of galley-slaves at work among the decaying arches, seemed to have accepted from the hands of man and made her own. The piled-up arches jutting into the blue air, in their shattered hugeness, seemed like vast overhanging rocks. "It has been changed by time into the image of an amphitheatre of rocky hills, overgrown by the wild olive, the myrtle, and the fig-tree, and threaded by little paths, which wind among its ruined stairs and immeasurable galleries: the copse-wood overshadows you as you wander through its labyrinths, and the wild weeds of this climate of flowers bloom under your feet." Here Mary sketched, while little William sported beside her ; and perhaps it was here that Shelley, on her second day of sketching (November 25), began that fragment of a tale which takes its name from the

CHAP. VI. sublime ruin. "Sketch in the Coliseum and the Temple of Peace," Mary writes in her journal; "read Montaigne. Nov. 1818-  
June, 1819. Shelley begins the 'Tale of the Coliseum.'" The fragment of narrative is of interest, not only as conveying, in language of vivid yet elaborated beauty, Shelley's impression of the vast relic of ancient Rome, but because it is inspired by his religious feeling, and contains the first outline of an idealized and transmuted portrait of himself. It is in Rome and at Easter, when the great miracle of the Resurrection is celebrated by the devotees of "the most awful religion of the world," that the blind old man, another *Cædipus* attended by another *Antigone*, turns away from the stream of Christian worshippers, and in the midst of the old ruins of the cruel amphitheatre, now made sacred by the ministries of Nature, confesses the eternal religion of Love. "'O Power!' cried the old man, lifting his sightless eyes towards the undazzling sun, 'thou which interpenetratest all things, and without which this glorious world were a blind and formless chaos! Love, Author of Good, God, King, Father! Friend of these thy worshippers! . . . It is thine to unite, to eternize; to make outlive the limits of the grave those who have left, among the living, memorials of thee.'"  
\* The strange and solitary youth, known to Italian rustics as *Il Diavolo di Bruto*, is a later *Laon*, guided and instructed by his *Diotima*, who would have been, were the tale completed, another *Laone*. In Shelley's description of the youth, *Medwin* perceived an idealized likeness, hardly overcharged, of Shelley himself. "It was a face, once seen, never to be forgotten. The mouth and the moulding of the chin resembled the eager and impassioned tenderness of the statues of *Antinous*; but instead of the effeminate sullenness of the eye, and the narrow smoothness of the forehead, shone an expression of profound and piercing thought; the brow was clear and open, and his

\* Shelley, a student of *Gibbon*, might have known that the highest act of homage to the Spirit of Love ever rendered in the cruel amphitheatre was the heroic self-immolation of the monk *Telemachus*, which led to the abolition of the games under *Honorius*.

eyes deep, like two wells of crystalline water which reflect CHAP. VI.  
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the all-beholding heavens. Over all was spread a timid expression of womanish tenderness and hesitation, which contrasted, yet intermingled strangely, with the abstracted and fearless character that predominated in his form and gestures." We cannot regret that the tale remains a fragment, for Shelley's best work belongs to a region in which concrete realities play a smaller part than they ought to play in prose fiction.

One other spot in Rome, in after-days to be for ever associated with his poetry and with his life and death, was viewed by Shelley with deep and solemn interest. In his days of boyhood the mystery and fascinating horror of death had at times overpowered his spirit; now he could feel its beauty and serious peace. "The English burying-place," he writes, "is a green slope near the walls, under the pyramidal tomb of Cestius, and is, I think, the most beautiful and solemn cemetery I ever beheld. To see the sun shining on its bright grass, fresh, when we first visited it, with the autumnal dews, and hear the whispering of the wind among the leaves of the trees which have overgrown the tomb of Cestius, and the soil which is stirring in the sun-warm earth, and to mark the tombs, mostly of women and young people, who were buried there, one might, if one were to die, desire the sleep they seem to sleep. Such is the human mind, and so it peoples with its wishes vacancy and oblivion."

On November 27, one day in advance of the others, in order to secure lodgings before the arrival of Mrs. Shelley, William, and Claire, Shelley set forth for Naples. He travelled *en voiturier*, but with all the speed that was possible, being only two nights on the road. A Lombard merchant and a Calabrian priest, "a fellow of gigantic strength and stature," had seats in the chaise. The reverend father's terror at sight of Shelley's pistol, his anguish on hearing the tale of two bishops murdered by banditti, his mortal agony at thought of travelling before daylight along the Pontine Marshes, were part

CHAP. VI. of the comedy of the journey. But when, as the carriage entered  
Nov. 1818- Naples, a youth was seen flying before a man armed with a  
June, 1819. knife, and when he actually fell in the street assassinated before the eyes of the travellers, the good priest, now past the dangers of the road with a whole skin, received the incident in a merry mood, and made untimely mockery of Shelley's horror and indignation. "I never felt," says Shelley, "such an inclination to beat any one." Of the country and its inhabitants he had noticed little, except that the wild beauty of the one and the barbarous ferocity of the others increased as they drove to the south.

A lodging was found which faced the royal gardens, and the blue waters of the bay, for ever changing, yet for ever the same; and on the evening of December 1, Mary, very weary after a long day's journey, was welcomed to her new abode. The climate was delicious, like that of an English spring, though lacking its spirit of hope and arrowy summons of delight. With windows open, and without a fire, they could sit indoors and read, or could saunter outside among statues and myrtle and orange groves in the gardens, or ride abroad to visit the sights of the city, or, if they should please, enjoy from a boat the glories of the bay. In Madame de Staël's "Corinne" Shelley found a romantic handbook to Naples and its environs; through Livy he kept himself in close relation with the history of antiquity; his guide and master in the study of ancient art was Winckelmann.

Among many memorable days, three stood out conspicuous for wonder and delight—December 8, when Baiæ was visited; December 16, when the adventurous wanderers ascended Vesuvius; and December 22, when they stood among the silent theatres and temples of Pompeii. Of these days Shelley has left a memorial in the letters addressed to Peacock—letters in which delicate observation is so united with exquisite pleasure, that words seem to have grown as translucent and as tremulously alive as the veil of air upon the hills, or as

crystal waters pierced by sunlight and revealing enchanted depths to one who gazes down. The delightful day of the visit to Baiæ did not close until night had fallen, "After seeing these things," writes Shelley, "we returned by moonlight to Naples in our boat. What colours there were in the sky, what radiance in the evening star, and how the moon was encompassed by a light unknown in our regions!"

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In the glaciers of Montanvert Shelley had seen overpowering greatness conjoined with radiant beauty. The waterfall of Terni had seemed the spectacle of all on which his eyes had gazed deserving to be placed next in grandeur to the glaciers. But when he had ascended Vesuvius, the waterfall sank into the third place. From Resina Shelley and Mary rode as far as was possible on mule-back; Claire was carried in a *chaise-à-porteur*, her lazzaroni bearers being hardly better than savages. While they were still among the streams and cataracts of lava, the sun sank between Capræ and Ischia; the glow of the volcanic fires increased; and the travellers descended by torchlight, their wild guides and bearers showing picturesque in the shifting flare and shadow, as they plunged through dust and cinders, shouting to one another, or suddenly raising a chorus to some wild fragment of national melody. The exertion and excitement overstrained Shelley's strength, and he arrived at the hermitage of San Salvador in a state of intense bodily suffering.

At Pompeii, Shelley found himself face to face with the lost life of ancient Greece. It was a warm and radiant day; and here was a whole city which in its days of joy and beauty had not shut men out from the light of nature, but had brought humanity into the perpetual presence of what is most glorious and most free in the visible world. The Greeks who lived here "lived in harmony with nature; and the interstices of their incomparable columns were portals, as it were, to admit the spirit of beauty, which animates this glorious universe to visit those whom it inspired." The noble prospect

CHAP. VI. around was not shut out, and, "unlike the inhabitants of the  
 Nov. 1818- Cimmerian ravines of modern cities, the ancient Pompeians  
 June, 1819. could contemplate the clouds and the lamps of heaven; could see the moon rise high behind Vesuvius, and the sun set in a sea, tremulous with an atmosphere of golden vapour, between Inarime and Misenum." But of all things the tombs placed along the consular road were to Shelley the most impressive. "The wild woods surround them on either side; and along the broad stones of the paved road which divides them, you hear the late leaves of autumn shiver and rustle in the stream of the inconstant wind, as it were, like the steps of ghosts." Even in presence of death, the inspirations of external nature had been felt, and these kept men sweet-tempered and sane. Alas, for those changes that conducted Athens to its ruin! and alas, for the Christian religion which put the finishing stroke to the graceful superstition of the Greeks! So Shelley sighs over the decline and fall of that civilization which had nourished spirits such as Sophocles and Plato.\*

Shelley had come to Naples without introductions to either English or Italians; and the common Neapolitans seemed to him so sullen and stupid, that it was impossible to hold agreeable intercourse with them. He suffered greatly in health, and the English physician, who treated him for disease of the liver, applying caustic to his side, caused him much discomfort and afforded him no relief. "We lived in utter solitude," says Mrs. Shelley, "and such is not often the nurse of cheerfulness." The excitement of his delight in excursions hither and thither was followed by a corresponding reaction of spirits. The

\* Reminiscences of this day at Pompeii appear in the "Ode to Naples," written towards the close of August, 1820:—

"I stood within the city disinterred;  
 And heard the autumnal leaves, like light footfalls  
 Of spirits passing through the streets; and heard  
 The mountain's slumberous voice at intervals  
 Thrill through those roofless halls."

"La Montagna," the mountain, is the name of Vesuvius for the inhabitants of Naples.

statues of the museum afforded him infinite pleasure, but the bodily fatigue of standing for hours in the galleries exhausted him. "I have," he says, "depression enough of spirits and not good health, though I believe the warm air of Naples does me good." The thought of his children, alienated from their father by a decree of the Court of Chancery, was often in his mind. "We have reports here of a change in the English ministry," he wrote to Peacock (January 26, 1819); "to what does it amount? For, besides my national interest in it, I am on the watch to vindicate my most sacred rights, invaded by the chancery court." Domestic affairs had not gone quite smoothly for Mrs. Shelley since they left Este. Paolo Foggi, the Italian servant, who, it was supposed at first, would cheat his master within reasonable limits, had proved himself to be an unqualified rascal. His robberies had far exceeded the bounds; and worse, he had corrupted and betrayed the Swiss nurse, Elise. At first, while it seemed that he was making honourable advances to her, Mrs. Shelley had opposed their union. Now she insisted that at least the ceremony of marriage should be celebrated. At the church of the British envoy Elise was "made an honest woman," and she and her husband (who cherished a bitter feeling of revenge against Shelley) took their departure for Rome.

Some events which occurred at Naples in December, 1818, exposed Shelley's reputation to the risk of malignant slander, and this fact Paolo in after-days knew how to turn to account. "The rascal Paolo," wrote Shelley, in the summer of 1820, to Mr. and Mrs. Gisborne, "has been taking advantage of my situation at Naples in December, 1818, to attempt to extort money by threatening to charge me with the most horrible crimes." The threatening letters were placed by Shelley in the hands of a lawyer, and Paolo for a time was crushed. We cannot doubt that the dangerous rascal's lying story was akin to that which he repeated afterwards to the Hoppners—that Miss Clairmont had given birth to a child, of which Shelley

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CHAP. VI. was the father, and that Shelley, whether with or without  
 Nov. 1818— Claire's consent, had sent it to a foundling hospital. What  
 June, 1819. circumstances lent any countenance to this malicious accusation we cannot tell. But we know that at Naples, in the midsummer of 1820, there died a little girl in whom Shelley was deeply interested, and who was to some extent placed under his charge or wardship. From Leghorn, on June 30, 1820, he wrote to Mr. and Mrs. Gisborne, who were acquainted with the facts: "My poor Neapolitan, I hear, has a severe fever of dentition. I suppose she will die and leave another memory to those which already torture me. I am waiting the next post with anxiety, but without much hope." And on July 2, "I have later news of my Neapolitan. I have taken every possible precaution for her, and hope that they will succeed. She is to come as soon as she recovers." And a little later, in an undated letter to the same correspondents, "My Neapolitan charge is dead. It seems as if the destruction that is consuming me were as an atmosphere which wrapt and *infected* everything connected with me."

Is it fanciful to connect these passages which speak of Shelley's Neapolitan charge, with the strange story related by Medwin of the unfortunate and infatuated lady—young, married, and of noble connections—who had declared her love to Shelley on the eve of his departure for the Continent in 1816, and whom he had gently but firmly repulsed. At Naples, says Medwin, Shelley "became the innocent actor in a tragedy more extraordinary than any to be found in the pages of romance."\* The unhappy lady had arrived at Naples on the very day of Shelley's arrival. There they met, and there, as Shelley declared to Medwin, she died. From Mr. Rossetti we learn that Miss Clairmont asserted that she was acquainted with the lady's name, and had even seen her at Naples. Can it be that she requested Shelley on her death-bed to act as

\* Memoir of Shelley prefixed to "Shelley Papers" (1833). In his "Life of Shelley" (1847), Medwin tells the story in detail as related to him by Shelley.

guardian of her infant child, and that this child was his poor CHAP. VI.  
 Neapolitan who died of teething-fever in the summer of Nov. 1818–  
 1820? June, 1819.

Certain it is that Shelley suffered much from depression of spirits at Naples, and that, solicitous for Mary's peace of mind, he did not betray to her more than was inevitable his melancholy thoughts. Now were written the exquisite stanzas in which the radiance of sea and sky is contrasted with his own forlorn despondency, and, amid the joyous voices of the waves and winds and birds, there is heard the voice of his own heart uttering a plaintive cry for death—

“ I could lie down like a tired child,  
 And weep away the life of care  
 Which I have borne and yet must bear,—  
 Till death like sleep might steal on me.”

“ Though he preserved the appearance of cheerfulness,” Mrs. Shelley writes, “ and often greatly enjoyed our wanderings in the environs of Naples, and our excursions on its sunny sea, yet many hours were passed when his thoughts, shadowed by illness, were gloomy ; and then he escaped to solitude, and in verses, which he hid from fear of wounding me, poured forth morbid, but too natural bursts of discontent and sadness. One looks back with unspeakable regret and gnawing remorse to such periods ; fancying that, had we been more alive to the nature of his feelings, and more attentive to soothe them, such would not have existed. And yet, enjoying, as he appeared to do, every sight or influence of earth or sky, it was difficult to imagine that any melancholy he showed was aught but the effect of the constant pain to which he was a martyr.” Mary Shelley's own spirits were at times so apt to sink, that her husband had good reason to guard her peace of mind, as far as was in his power, from disturbing influences.\*

\* Leigh Hunt writes to Mrs. Shelley, July, 1819, “ I know, at least I have often suspected, that you have a tendency, partly constitutional, perhaps, and partly owing to the turn of your philosophy, to look over-intensely at the dark side

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Nov. 1818–  
June, 1819.

It had been Shelley's plan to return in the spring to Rome, where he had hoped to spend three months in the study of its treasures of antiquity and art. Illness confined him much to the house during February, but on the 23rd of that month he was well enough to start, with Mary and Claire, on a long-contemplated expedition to Pæstum. Unluckily the weather, which had been of cloudless serenity, broke, and rain fell in torrents as they drove towards Nocera and La Cava; but as they approached Salerno the declining sun shot forth, amid tempestuous mists, a beam of splendour. "Nothing could be more glorious than the scene. The immense mountains, covered with the rare and divine vegetation of this climate, with many-folding vales, and deep dark recesses, which the fancy scarcely could penetrate, descended from their snowy summits precipitously to the sea." The night was one of storm, but before daybreak the travellers were on their way to Pæstum. "It was utterly dark, except when the long line of wave burst, with a sound like thunder beneath the starless sky, and cast up a kind of mist of cold white lustre." The bridge across the Sele was broken, and it was necessary to march on foot some six or seven miles of marshy road over the desolate plain, until at length appeared the "sublime and massy colonnades" skirting the horizon of the wilderness. Roses of Pæstum were nowhere visible, but violets of extraordinary size and beauty scented the air. Not more than two hours could be allowed for contemplation of the temples, and those hours went swiftly by. "Of course we could only bring away," says Shelley, "as imperfect a conception of these sublime monuments as is the shadow of some half-remembered dream."

of human things." Mrs. Shelley herself acknowledged her tendency to sadness. In connection with Medwin's story, Mr. Rossetti notes a passage in a letter of Shelley to Ollier, dated "Florence, December 25 [or perhaps 15], 1819:" "Have you seen my poem 'Julian and Maddalo'? Suppose you print that in the manner of Hunt's 'Hero and Leander'; for I mean to write three other poems, the scenes of which will be laid at Rome, Florence, and Naples, but the subjects of which will be all drawn from dreadful or beautiful realities, as that of this was." Shelley may or may not mean realities of his personal experience.

Four days later, on the afternoon of February 28, 1819, CHAP. VI. they looked for the last time on bay and mountain as they Nov. 1818-drove towards Capua on the way to Rome. At Mola they June, 1819. rested for a day, and enjoyed the *dolce fur' niente* of the south, playing at chess, strolling by the seashore, or among the orange-copses, "an emerald sky of leaves starred with innumerable globes of their ripening fruit." On March 5, Rome, fourteen miles distant, was visible from Albano. "Arches after arches in unending lines stretching across the uninhabited wilderness, the blue defined line of the mountains seen between them; masses of nameless ruin standing like rocks out of the plain; and the plain itself, with its billowy and unequal surface, announced the neighbourhood of Rome." Before that day closed they had entered the capital of the world.

Having obtained lodgings in the Palazzo Verospi on the Corso, Shelley, Mary, and Claire set themselves vigorously to the study of Rome—the Rome of dead centuries, and the Rome of the living to-day. They were not quite without acquaintances, for Lord Guilford called on them at once, and, at a somewhat later date, Sir William Drummond, whose "Academical Questions" were so highly esteemed by Shelley, and whose investigations of the remains at Herculaneum must have interested a recent resident at Naples. Evening after evening Claire or Mary, or both of them, visited the Signora Marianna Dionigi, a distinguished painter, antiquary, authoress, and member of academies innumerable, now in her elder years, "very old, very miserly, and very mean" (so, after a month's acquaintance, Mary described her to Mrs. Gisborne), but a centre of intellectual culture in Rome, and able to gather many strangers to her *conversazioni*.\* The days were not spent in casual pleasures. With that zeal for self-improvement which

\* She was born in 1756, died in 1826. Her principal works are "Le Regole elementare della Pittura de' Paesi" (1816), and "Sulle cinque città del Lazio che diconsi fondate da Saturno."

CHAP. VI. had been a part of their nature since girlhood, Mary and Claire sought training each for her special faculty or aptitude. Nov. 1818–  
June, 1819. Mary had her drawing-master, Claire her lessons in singing. Nor was Shelley idle. He read Lucretius, Euripides, Plutarch, Winckelmann; under the quickening influence of a radiant spring he wrote with ardour; he visited the museums, the galleries, the churches, the monuments of ancient Rome. “You know not,” he wrote to Peacock, “how delicate the imagination becomes by dieting with antiquity day after day.” At evening, after a day of intellectual fatigue, he would find exquisite refreshment in a walk tending in some direction which might permit him to feel the joy of the opening year in presence of the monumental grandeur of the elder days. “I walk forth in the purple and golden light of an Italian evening, and return by star or moonlight, through this scene. I see the radiant Orion through the mighty columns of the temple of Concord, and the mellow fading light softens down the modern buildings of the Capitol, the only ones that interfere with the sublime desolation of the scene.” His health improved, although towards the close of April he was for a time seriously ailing, and it was feared that the Roman air was sapping his strength. His spirits were “not the most brilliant in the world,” but that, he says, “we attribute to our solitary situation, and though happy, how should I be lively?” The society of English residents and tourists was distasteful to him; but the Romans pleased him much—at least for a time—and especially the Roman women, who, in their lack of culture and innocent *naïveté*, seemed to him like uncorrupted children, or a kind of gentle savages.

Some extracts from the diaries of Mary and Claire will serve to show how the days went by.

*Mary Shelley's Journal.*

“*Sunday, March 7.*—Move to our lodgings. A rainy day. Visit the Coliseum. Read the Bible.

"*Monday, March 8.*—Visit the museum of the Vatican. CHAP. VI.  
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Read the Bible.

"*Tuesday, March 9.*—Shelley and I go to the Villa Borghese. Drive about Rome. Visit the Pantheon. Visit it again by moonlight, and see the yellow rays fall through the roof upon the floor of the temple. Visit the Coliseum.

"*Wednesday, March 10.* Visit the Capitol, and see the most divine statues. Lord Guilford calls.

"*Wednesday, March 24.*—Drawing-master. Read Livy and Montaigne. Shelley reads Euripides. Visit the Vatican. See the pictures of Raphael.

"*Tuesday, March 30.*—Draw all day. Ride to the Borghese Gardens. Shelley goes to hear the 'Miserere' in the evening. Shelley reads Plutarch's 'Life of Marius.'

"*Thursday, April 1.* Walk to the Capitol. Go to the Vatican with Shelley and Willmouse.\* Read 'Romeo and Juliet.' Shelley reads the 'Hippolytus' of Euripides.

*Claire Clairmont's Journal.*

\* *Friday, March 12.*—Go to St. Peter's with the Signora Dionigi; hear mass and a sermon by the Padre Pacifico. The voice of the Padre is his chiefest excellence, powerful and musical; his Italian is perfect. The music of the mass is divine, and the voices of the singing-boys sounded in this vast edifice like flutes. We saw the Pope Pius VII., a poor old man upon the brink of the grave, and many cardinals almost as old and trembling. In the afternoon, go to the Capitol and visit the statues.

*Sunday, March 14.*—Read Cobbett. Go to the Capitol and the Coliseum. We range over every part—along the narrow, grassy walks on the top of the arches; above us on the nodding ruins grew the wallflowers in abundance. The Coliseum resembles a mountain; its arches and recesses

\* A pet name for William.

CHAP. VI. appear as so many caves, and here and there are spread, as in  
 Nov. 1818– the most favoured of nature's spots, grassy platforms with  
 June, 1819. a scattered fruit or thorn tree in blossom. I think there can be nothing more delightful than a daily walk over the Capitol to visit the ruins of the Forum. In ancient times the Forum was to a city what the soul is to the body—the place in which concentrated all the most powerful and the best. In the evening I go again with S[helley], and see it under the grey eye of twilight.

“*Monday, March 15.*—In the morning, go to the gardens of the Villa Borghese, where there is a beautiful lake and an ancient temple dedicated to Æsculapius the Saviour. Here, then, I caught a glimpse of the ancients; so rose their temples like the one before us. On the brink of a clear lake, a pillared edifice of white marble of the most ærial form; around, groves of the dark ilex and laurel trees. These gardens are extensive, with a variety of green shady nooks, with statues and fountains.

“*Tuesday, March 16.*—Go in the morning to the gardens of the Villa Borghese; sit on the steps of the temple of Æsculapius and read Wordsworth. . . .

“*Sunday, March 28.*—Mr. and Mrs. Bell call.\* Walk with S[helley] to the Capitol and the Coliseum. It is a most bright and beautiful day. Drive in the Borghese Gardens, and sit on the steps of the divine temple of Æsculapius the Saviour. I see many priests walking about it. In the evening, go to the conversazione of the Signora Marianna Dionigi, where there is a cardinal, and many unfortunate Englishmen, who, after having crossed their legs and said nothing the whole evening, rose all up at once, made their bows and filed off.”

The liveliness of the city lay in abeyance during the earlier part of the season of Lent; but in 1819, Holy Week was celebrated with more than ordinary pomp, for the Emperor of Austria was a visitor to Rome. A function or a *fête* was

\* Dr. Bell was a physician.

arranged for every successive day. On Holy Thursday, Mary and Claire, with the Signora Dionigi, saw the cross lighted at St. Peter's. On Good Friday, when a walk with Shelley to the Coliseum was ended and evening had come, they were present at the Washing of the Pilgrim's Feet and the Supper, at which cardinals handed about the macaroni to the hungry beggars. On Easter Sunday, they witnessed the great function at St. Peter's, and in the evening saw the flaming cross in the Cupola, and the fireworks at the Castle of St. Angelo, which exhibited, in addition to the customary girandola, the Mausoleum of Hadrian in a fiery restoration. The *fête* given at the Capitol on April 20 was one of unusual splendour. Shelley, unhappily, was ill, but not too ill to prevent Mary, attended by an English acquaintance, Mr. Davies, from seeing something of the spectacle. "The three palaces," she wrote to Mrs. Gisborne, when reviewing the various entertainments of April, "were joined by a gallery, and the whole hung with silk, and illuminated in the most magnificent manner; and the dying gladiator, surrounded by his Apollos and Venuses, shone forth very beautifully. There were very fine fireworks, and a supper not at all in the Italian taste, for there was an abundance which did honour to the cardinal who superintended the *fête*. Every one was pleased, and the Romans in ecstasies. I have not room to tell you how gracefully the old venerable Pope fulfilled the Church ceremonies, or how surprised and delighted we were with the lighting of St. Peter's; all this must serve for gossip when we meet." But the shows and ceremonies did not conceal from Mary a deeper aspect of things; it was rumoured that the emperor would be very willing to take the Roman States into the keeping of the Holy Roman Empire. "This," she writes, "would be a fall (to say the least of it) from nothingness to hell" "Idiots and slaves!" breaks forth Shelley, at news of Italian cheering and tossing up of caps for the emperor and Maria Louisa. "Idiots and slaves! Like the frogs in the fable,

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CHAP. VI. because they are discontented with the log, they call upon the  
 Nov. 1818- stork, who devours them." \*  
 June, 1819.

Modern Italy appeared to Shelley to have sunk to a state of spiritual impotence and moral degradation. In the square of St. Peter's he saw the herd of fettered criminals at work, while near them sat or sauntered groups of soldiers armed with loaded muskets. The clank of the chains was heard above the musical dashing of the fountains, while overhead shone the infinite azure of an April sky, and around rose the magnificence of Roman architecture. Such a contrast of human wretchedness with human grandeur, and again with the inviolable freedom of nature, caused in Shelley "a conflict of sensations allied to madness." It is the emblem of Italy, he writes—"moral degradation contrasted with the glory of nature and the arts." The first impression made upon him by St. Peter's was one of disappointment. Externally it seemed inferior in beauty to St. Paul's; internally, he says, "it exhibits littleness on a large scale." Nor did this impression pass away, although Shelley could feel that the vast design, conceived by the brain and achieved by the hand of man, is an astonishing monument of human energy and daring. The genius of Michael Angelo disconcerted and almost repelled him. Insensible to the profoundly Christian spirit of an art which recognizes man as the lord and conqueror of nature, and as the humble yet aspiring servant of the invisible God, Shelley saw in Michael Angelo's work, as painter, sculptor, and architect, only the attempt of a barbarian to be classical. Where in Michael Angelo was there to be discerned any sense of beauty or of moral dignity? where any perception of the creative power of mind? His "Moses" was only less monstrous and detestable than the Moses of the Old Testament; his "Day of Judgment" was a kind of "Titus Andronicus" in painting.† Of his tenderness, his ardour of love, his passion

\* To Peacock, April 6, 1819.

† In the "Defence of Poetry" there is a passing reference to Michael Angelo as one among the great powers of art, and beneficent as such in his moral influence.

of inspiration, Shelley could perceive nothing. On the whole, CHAP. VI.  
 what pleased him best, perhaps, in Rome, setting aside the Nov. 1818-  
 remains of classical antiquity, was the beauty of its fountains. June, 1819.  
 The group formed by the statues of Castor and Pollux, the obelisk and fountain on the Quirinal, delighted him beyond measure. "From the Piazza Quirinale, or rather Monte Cavallo, you see the boundless ocean of domes, spires, and columns, which is the city, Rome. On a pedestal of white marble rises an obelisk of red granite, piercing the blue sky. Before it is a vast basin of porphyry, in the midst of which rises a column of the purest water, which collects into itself all the overhanging colours of the sky, and breaks them into a thousand prismatic hues and graduated shadows—they fall together with its dashing water-drops into the outer basin. The elevated situation of this fountain produces, I imagine, this effect of colour." The sublime and living majesty of the two colossal figures, the fiery animation of the horses, "seen in the blue sky of Italy, and overlooking the city of Rome, surrounded by the light and the music of that crystalline fountain," gave Shelley a sense of greatness united with beauty which he vainly sought in the noblest creations of Michael Angelo.

But it was in solitude, among the flowery ruins of ancient Rome, that his highest mountings of the mind, his finest trances of thought, came to Shelley. The first act of his "Prometheus Unbound" had been achieved for the most part in the summer-house of his garden at Este. From Naples, on January 26, he had written to Peacock, informing him that the act was now complete. The second and third acts were wrought out amid surroundings fitted to sustain his imagination in its highest endeavours. The days were bright and beautiful, and in the mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla he lived in communion at once with nature and with the energies of human genius. There, morning after morning, he devoted himself to his great poem; there, in the

CHAP. VI. springtime, he was with Asia in the springtime, deep in a  
 Nov. 1818–  
 June, 1819. vale of the Indian Caucasus; there he pursued, with the sister-spirits of Love and Faith, that forest-path which leads to the realm of Demogorgon; and there the vision passed before him of the ultimate ruin of tyranny and the redemption of the better genius of mankind. Shelley has himself described the majestic and beautiful desolation in the midst of which he wrote—a passage well known, and which hardly permits itself to be abridged. “I think I told you,” he wrote to Peacock (March 23, 1819), “of the Coliseum and its impression on me, on my first visit to this city. The next most considerable relic of antiquity, considered as a ruin, is the Thermæ of Caracalla. These consist of six enormous chambers, above two hundred feet in height, and each inclosing a vast space like that of a field. There are, in addition, a number of towers and labyrinthine recesses, hidden and woven over by the wild growth of weeds and ivy. Never was any desolation more sublime and lovely. The perpendicular wall of ruin is cloven into steep ravines filled up with flowering shrubs, whose thick twisted roots are knotted in the rifts of the stones. At every step the ærial pinnacles of shattered stone group into new combinations of effect, and tower above the lofty yet level walls, as the distant mountains change their aspect to one travelling rapidly along the plain. . . . These walls surround green and level spaces of lawn, on which some elms have grown, and which are interspersed towards their skirts by masses of the fallen ruin overtwined with the broad leaves of the creeping weeds. The blue sky canopies it, and is as the everlasting roof of these enormous halls.

“But the most interesting effect remains. In one of the buttresses, that supports an immense and lofty arch, which ‘bridges the very winds of heaven,’ are the crumbling remains of an antique winding staircase, whose sides are open in many places to the precipice. This you ascend, and arrive on the summit of these piles. There grow on every side thick

entangled wildernesses of myrtle, and the myrletus, and bay, CHAP. VI. and the flowering laurustinus, whose white blossoms are just developed, the wild fig, and a thousand nameless plants sown by the wandering winds. These woods are intersected on every side by paths like sheep-tracks through the copse-wood of steep mountains, which wind to every part of this immense labyrinth. From the midst rise those pinnacles and masses, themselves like mountains, which have been seen from below. . . . Come to Rome. It is a scene by which expression is overpowered; which words cannot convey. Still further, winding up one-half of the shattered pyramids by the path through the blooming copse-wood, you come to a little mossy lawn, surrounded by the wild shrubs; it is overgrown with anemones, wallflowers, and violets, whose stalks pierce the starry moss, and with radiant blue flowers, whose names I know not, and which scatter through the air the divinest odour, which, as you recline under the shade of the ruin, produces sensations of voluptuous faintness like the combinations of sweet music. The paths still wind on, threading the perplexed windings, other labyrinths, other lawns, and deep dells of wood and lofty rocks and terrific chasms. When I tell you that these ruins cover several acres, and that the paths above penetrate at least half their extent, your imagination will fill up all that I am unable to express of this astonishing scene."

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Critics endeavouring to find what is of most value in Shelley's highest poem, have analyzed the ideas which lie behind its marvellous imagery. It is not here that we shall discover what is of chief worth in "Prometheus Unbound." Shelley's ideas are abstractions made from a one-sided and imperfect view of facts. No dream or prophecy of the future of the human race can be of authentic value which ignores the true conditions of human existence. Humanity is no chained Titan of indomitable virtue. It is a weak and trembling thing, which yet, through error and weakness,

CHAP. VI. traversed or overcome, may at last grow strong. To represent  
 Nov. 1818- evil as external—the tyranny of a malignant God or Fortune,  
 June, 1819. or as an intellectual error—is to falsify the true conception of human progress. The progress which indeed concerns us is that which consists in working out the beast, and gradually growing to the fulness of the stature of the perfect man. Goethe's "Faust," inferior in imaginative splendour to "Prometheus Unbound," expresses an order of ideas far juster and more profound. The advance of Faust is from error to truth, from weakness to strength, from inward disruption to inward harmony, from egoism to self-transcending love; it is a moral and spiritual ascension, no mere deliverance from the tyranny of circumstance or of fate. But Shelley, now as always, wrote as the disciple of William Godwin. All the glittering fallacies of "Political Justice"—now sufficiently tarnished—together with all its encouraging and stimulating truths, may be found in the *caput mortuum* left when the critic has reduced the poetry of the "Prometheus" to a series of doctrinaire statements. But fortitude, justice, love, beauty, hope, unquenched desire—these indeed lead men forward towards the highest ends of their existence, and these are animating moral powers of Shelley's radiant song. And the life and joy of Earth, in her moments of rapture, have passed into his verse, so that its music sounds like the voice of the quickening April winds. He himself has spoken more truly and happily of the poem than any of his critics. "The blue sky of Rome," he writes, "and the effect of the vigorous awakening of spring in that divinest climate, and the new life with which it drenches the spirits even to intoxication, were the inspiration of this drama." These, passing from the senses to the poet's spirit in sense.

By April 6, the third act of "Prometheus Unbound," which concludes the poem as at first designed, was nearly finished. The intense intellectual strain, the solitude of Rome, the absence of friends, left Shelley's heart at times weak, and he thought longingly of England. But health, competence, tran-

quility, were attainable in Italy, and of these England would CHAP. VI. deprive him. And at best his friends were few; they might, Nov. 1818–June, 1819. he supposed, be counted on one hand. “I am regarded by all who know or hear of me,” he writes, with an excess of despondent feeling, “except, I think, on the whole five individuals, as a rare prodigy of crime and pollution, whose look even might infect. This is a large computation, and I don’t think I could mention more than three. Such is the spirit of the English abroad as well as at home.” And yet he felt at times a craving for the grey skies and pleasant English firesides. “I shall return,” he said to Peacock, “some fine morning out of pure weakness of heart.” Not now, however, nor for some time to come. He and Mary had planned to start for Naples towards the end of May, and seek a seaside house for the summer months at Castellamare, where Mr. and Mrs. Gisborne might become their guests. The physicians promised much good to Shelley’s health from a Neapolitan summer. “What shall I say to entice you?” Shelley wrote to his friends at Leghorn. “We shall have a piano and some books, and—little else, beside ourselves. But what will be most inviting to you, you will give much, though you may receive but little, pleasure.” Shelley’s ill health seemed to make it advisable that they should quit Rome earlier than had been intended, and May 7 was now fixed for their departure. A fortnight before that date, when driving in the Borghese Gardens, Mary and Claire believed that they recognized a former guest of Godwin’s—Miss Curran, daughter of the Irish Master of the Rolls. Next day they left a card at Miss Curran’s, and on Tuesday, April 27, had the pleasure of receiving at their lodgings their old acquaintance. Miss Curran had some skill in painting; Mary Shelley was a beginner in the art. Morning after morning the two friends spent together happily employed. Shelley’s feebleness and feverish depression had passed away. When the day for leaving Rome arrived, Miss Curran was at work on two portraits—one of Claire, who

CHAP. VI. had given a couple of sittings, and one of Shelley, begun upon that morning (May 7). It was decided to postpone the journey to Naples, and again on the next day Shelley gave Miss Curran a sitting. This portrait, begun when Shelley was but lately recovered from a feverish illness, the hasty work of an imperfectly trained amateur, is that by which the face of Shelley is most widely known. The portrait was at first condemned by Mary Shelley. Miss Curran believed that it would never be inquired for by the friends for whom it had been painted, and, when about to leave Italy, she was on the point of burning it, with artistic lumber that would have impeded her travel. Happily, just as the fire was scorching it, the picture was saved—saved to become, in spite of its defects, a precious possession to those who most hold Shelley's memory dear. Other portraits followed on Miss Curran's easel—one of little William, painted on May 14 and 15, and one of Mary, begun on May 28. These were considered to be more successful likenesses than that of Shelley.\*

Happy it was for Mary that she had found a friend just at this moment. Expecting the birth of a babe in the autumn, she was ill fitted to endure strain and shock, and a wave of calamity was now about to break and overwhelm her. The design of spending the summer at Castellamare was abandoned towards the close of May. Little William, his father's blue-eyed darling, had been unwell, and it was feared that the heat of the southern climate might increase his disorder. The surgeon whose attendance Mary would need in the autumn was following the Princess Pauline Borghese to the Baths of Lucca, and would be either at Pisa or Florence at the time when Mrs. Shelley would require his services. It was decided, therefore, to travel northwards; to pass the hotter months at the Baths of Lucca, or the Baths of Pisa, and to settle for the winter in the city of Pisa, a place strongly recommended as likely to benefit Shelley's health. Sunday, June 6, was fixed

\* Mary had also given the Signor Delicati a sitting.

as the day of departure from Rome. "We should like of all things to have a house near you by the seaside at Livorno," Mary wrote to Mrs. Gisborne, "but the heat would frighten me for William, who is so very delicate that we must take the greatest possible care of him this summer." On the evening of Wednesday, June 2, William, who had been gaining in strength, was seized with an alarming gastric attack. Mr. Bell, an excellent English physician, called three times to see him; Claire sat night-long by his bed. When the evening of the next day came, he seemed to be better. Miss Curran called, and kindly wrote to Mrs. Gisborne for Mary, who was very unwell, informing her that the journey to Lucca was for the present postponed. On Friday, Mary's journal stops abruptly, as that of Claire's had stopped on the previous day. The hours passed miserably, with fluctuations of hope and fear—fear ever growing the stronger. On Saturday, Mary contrived to write a few lines to her friend at Leghorn. "William," she says, "is in the greatest danger. We do not quite despair, yet we have the least possible reason to hope. Yesterday, he was in the convulsions of death, and he was saved from them; yet we dare not, must not, hope. I will write as soon as any change takes place. The misery of these hours is beyond calculation. The hopes of my life are bound up in him. Ever yours affectionately, M. W. S. I am well, and so is Shelley, although he is more exhausted by watching than I am. William is in a high fever." At noon, on Monday, June 7—the day following that which had been fixed for their departure from Rome—William Shelley died.\* His father had watched during sixty hours of agony without closing his eyes; yet on Tuesday he roused himself to write a mournful note to Peacock. "Yesterday, after an illness of only a few days, my little William died. There was no hope from the

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\* The date on the tombstone is the true one. The note in Shelley's "Letters from Italy," ii. p. 178, which names June 6, is incorrect. Shelley's letter of June 8 is confirmed by Miss Clairmont's diary: "Monday, June 7, at noonday."



CHAP. VI. moment of the attack. You will be kind enough to tell all  
 Nov. 1818— my friends, so that I need not write to them. It is a great  
 June, 1819. exertion to me to write this, and it seems to me as if, hunted by calamity as I have been, that I should never recover any cheerfulness again. If the things Mary desired to be sent to Naples have not been shipped, send them to Livorno. We leave this city for Livorno to-morrow morning, where we have written to take lodgings for a month. I will then write again." In the English burial-ground, near the Porta San Paolo, which on his first visit to Rome had so soothingly impressed Shelley with a sense of its lovely and solemn seclusion, the body of his beloved son was laid. "This spot," he wrote, "is the repository of a sacred loss, of which the yearnings of a parent's heart are now prophetic; he is rendered immortal by love, as his memory is by death." The father, who, when he feared that the Court of Chancery might deprive him of William, had sung to him of the life they should lead

"By the azure sea  
 Of serene and golden Italy,"

now attempted to sing a requiem for his dead child.

"Where art thou, my gentle child?  
 Let me think thy spirit feeds,  
 With its life intense and mild,  
 The love of living leaves and weeds,  
 Among these tombs and ruins wild;—  
 Let me think that, through low seeds  
 Of the sweet flowers and sunny grass,  
 Into their hues and scents may pass  
 A portion——"

At which point the fragment closes, as if the writer's heart had drawn down his imagination into the dark and silent chamber of grief.\*

\* The precise spot where William Shelley's body lies is unknown. Shelley and Mary were unable to superintend the erection of the tombstone, and it was wrongly placed over the body of an adult. This was discovered afterwards, when it was desired to remove the child's body and bring it close beside his father's ashes in the new cemetery hard by.

## CHAPTER VII.

VILLA VALSOVANO, LEGHORN: FLORENCE (JUNE, 1819, TO  
JANUARY, 1820).

THE gap in Mary Shelley's journal, which occurs upon the death of her beloved child, is partly filled by a short entry in the journal of Miss Clairmont, summing up the incidents of the month of sorrow.

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*Claire Clairmont's Journal (June, 1819).*

"Monday, June 7, at noonday. Thursday, June 10, set out from Rome for Livorno. We visit the waterfall of Terni once again. We see also the Lake of Thrasimene, now called the Lake of Perugia. Arrive at Livorno—'Aquila Nera'—Thursday, 17th. Stay there a week; see the Gisbornes. Remove to Viletta Valsovano, near Monte Nero. Read Cobbett's 'Journal in America,' Birkbeck's 'Notes on the Illinois,' 'Nightmare Abbey,' and the 'Heart of Midlothian' by Walter Scott."

It was good for Mary now that she should not live quite alone, nor yet amid the uncongenial gaieties of a summer watering-place. Leghorn or its neighbourhood would suit her well, where Mrs. Gisborne's society might help to hold in check the desolating inroads of grief and pain, and where some quiet dwelling-place might be found outside the bustle of the town. The thought of proceeding to the Baths of Lucca, or to

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Florence, was accordingly abandoned, and the Villa Valsovano, an airy little country house, at a short distance from Leghorn—about half-way between the city and Monte Nero—was taken for three months. The house stood at the end of a green lane, and was surrounded by a tiny estate, worked as a market-garden. The summer was one of unusual heat, diversified by thunderstorms of majestic terror. There was refreshment for the senses in the vine-festoons alternating with rows of cabbages, in the olive, fig, and peach trees, in the myrtle hedges, with their faint sweet perfume, in green grassy walks leading through the vines, and in the creak of the water-wheel as the process of irrigation went on. The peasants, bare-breasted, brown-legged, at work in the heat, sang cheerfully, if not very melodiously, to the cicala's noisy accompaniment. At night, the myrtle hedges were alive with the pale-green meteors of the fire-flies.

But pleasant surroundings will not stay the cruel aching of a heart. Mary Shelley had endured the loss of her little Clara, and had bravely struggled to be calm; her affections had twined themselves closer and with tenderer vehemence around her surviving child; and now William's body lay among the roots and dews of the Roman cemetery. It was impossible for her to keep her spirits from sinking into the depths, impossible not to feel that the waves and billows had gone over her. Godwin, using "the privilege of a father and a philosopher," expostulated with her. She was lowering her character in a memorable degree; she was putting herself quite "among the commonalty and mob of her sex," when he had thought that she would take rank among the noble spirits that do honour to our nature. What did she need that she had not? She possessed the husband of her choice, and all the goods of fortune, and all the means of being useful to others. "But you have lost a child," he wrote; "and all the rest of the world, all that is beautiful, and all that has a claim upon your kindness, is nothing, because a child of three years

old is dead!" Adversity's sweet milk—philosophy—was certainly an insufficient cordial for Mary's drooping spirits. More gently fell Leigh Hunt's words upon her heart. "We must all weep on these occasions, and it is better for the kindly fountains within us that we should. May you weep quietly, but not long; and may the calmest and most affectionate spirit that comes out of the contemplation of great things, and the love of all, lay his most blessed hand upon you." William's grave—on this Mary's gaze seems perpetually to be anchored. "Let us hear, also," she wrote to Miss Curran (June 27), "anything you may have done about the tomb, near which I shall lie one day, and care not, for my own sake, how soon. I never shall recover that blow; I feel it more now than at Rome; the thought never leaves me for a single moment; everything on earth has lost its interest to me. You see I told you that I could only write to you on one subject; how can I, since, do all I can (and I endeavour very sincerely), I can think of no other? so I will leave off." And to Mrs. Hunt, on August 28: "I never am in good spirits—often in very bad; and Hunt's portrait has already seen me shed so many tears, that, if it had his heart as well as his eyes, he would weep too in pity. But no more of this, or a tear will come now, and there is no use for that."\*

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An extract from Mary Shelley's diary will tell of her despondency, and of the effort which she made to resist its enervating power:—

"*Wednesday, August 4.*—Leghorn. I begin my journal on Shelley's birthday. We have now lived five years together; and if all the events of the five years were blotted out, I might be happy; but to have won, and then cruelly to have lost, the associations of four years, is not an accident to which the human mind can bend without much suffering.

\* In this letter, confessing that she has done little since coming to Italy, she ascribes this to the sight-seeing of the earlier Italian days, and to many vexations "independent of those which God has kindly sent to wean me from the world, if I were too fond of it."

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"Since I left home I have read several books of Livy, Antenor, Clarissa Harlowe, the *Spectator*, a few novels, and am now reading the Bible, and Lucan's 'Pharsalia,' and Dante. Shelley is to-day twenty-seven years of age. Write; read Lucan and the Bible. Shelley writes the 'Cenci,' and reads Plutarch's 'Lives.' The Gisbornes call in the evening. Shelley reads 'Paradise Lost' to me. Read two cantos of 'Purgatorio.'"

On the following day (August 5), Shelley wrote to Miss Curran on the subject of the intended monument to be placed over William's body.\*

*Shelley to Miss Curran.*

Livorno, August 5, 1819.

MY DEAR MISS CURRAN,

I ought to have written to you some time ago, but my ill spirits and ill health has for ever furnished me with an excuse for delaying till to-morrow. I fear that you still continue too capable of justly estimating my apology.

A thousand thanks for your kind attention to my request. I have considered the drawings, and neither of them, nor indeed perhaps any attempt at *Sculpture*, seems to me fit for the purpose. I strongly incline to prefer an unornamental pyramid of white marble, as of the most durable form and the simplest appearance; but, if you will permit, I will send you my decision soon. You have too much goodness not to excuse on such a subject the trouble which I give you. I will send at the same time the inscription.

Mary's spirits still continue wretchedly depressed, more so than a stranger (though perhaps I ought not to call you so) could imagine. We live seeing no one but one lady who is agreeable [Mrs. Gisborne]. We think, but as yet only think, of Rome for the winter.

I have nearly finished my "Cenci," which Mary likes. I wish very much to get a good *engraving* made of the picture in the Colonna Palace, and to have the plate by the autumn. How much time and money would a first-rate Roman artist demand for such a work? Dare I ask you to add to the amount of so many favours,

\* The original of this letter is in the manuscript department of the British Museum.

which must be long unrepaid, that of charging yourself with such a kindness?

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What we owe to you in possessing the Picture [*i.e.* of William] is more than I can express. May I hope that some day will arrive on which it will be possible to find other expressions for it than words?

Let us hear of your health and spirits, and be they better.

Most sincerely yours,

P. B. SHELLEY.

Could you be kind enough—Mary says—as to send any drawings of simple monumental forms such as you consider beautiful as well as desirable? I incline to a mere pyramid.

For Shelley there was a twofold grief—the loss of his boy, and in a certain sense the loss of his wife, since her heart and soul seemed to be buried out of the reach of light and air.

“Thy little footsteps on the sands  
Of a remote and lonely shore;  
The twinkling of thine infant hands,  
Where now the worm will feed no more:  
Thy mingled look of love and glee  
When we returned to gaze on thee.” \*

These were dear and piteous, yet dread, memories. It was hardly less sad to feel that Mary lay captive in dark recesses of sorrow beyond his reach.

“My dearest Mary, wherefore hast thou gone,  
And left me in this dreary world alone?  
Thy form is here indeed—a lovely one—  
But *thou* art fled, gone down the dreary road  
That leads to Sorrow’s most obscure abode;

\* Mrs. Shelley notes as having reference to William the passage of the “Cenci,” where Beatrice speaks to Cardinal Camillo of

“That fair blue-eyed boy  
Who was the lodestar of your life;”

and adds—

“All see since his most swift and piteous death,  
That day and night, and heaven and earth, and time,  
And all the things hoped for or done therein,  
Are changed to you, through your exceeding grief.”

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Thou sittest on the hearth of pale Despair,  
Where,  
For thine own sake, I cannot follow thee."

"Our house," he wrote to Peacock, "is a melancholy one, and only cheered by letters from England." Naturally his thoughts reverted to the happier days at Marlow and in London, where Mary and he had been cheered and sustained amid their anxieties by the love of friends. "I most devoutly wish," he says, "I were living near London. . . . My inclinations point to Hampstead; but I do not know whether I should not make up my mind to something more completely suburban. What are mountains, trees, heaths, or even the glorious and ever-beautiful sky, with such sunsets as I have seen at Hampstead, to friends? Social enjoyment, in some form or other, is the Alpha and the Omega of existence. All that I see in Italy—and from my tower window I now see the magnificent peaks of the Apennine half enclosing the plain—is nothing; it dwindles into smoke in the mind, when I think of some familiar forms of scenery, little perhaps in themselves, over which old remembrances have thrown a delightful colour." At an early age grey hairs appeared among the brown on Shelley's head, and in such words as these there is already a touch of the autumnal feeling.

Shelley's "tower" was the terrace roofed and glazed at the top of the house. Here he studied, meditated, gazed forth over the wide prospect towards the hills or seawards, watched the storms as they drove across the landscape, as the lurid clouds dipped to the waves, or were chased and scattered by the tempest; or if the sun glared and glowed, Shelley basked in the excessive heat, with health and spirits reviving under its influence.\* "My employments," he tells Peacock, "are these: I awaken usually at seven; read half an hour; then get up; breakfast; after breakfast ascend *my tower*, and read

\* Mrs. Shelley's note on the "Cenci."

or write until two. Then we dine. After dinner I read Dante with Mary, gossip a little, eat grapes and figs, sometimes walk, though seldom, and at half-past five pay a visit to Mrs. Gisborne, who reads Spanish with me until near seven. We then come for Mary and stroll about till supper-time." \* It was the "Purgatorio" of which Shelley now read two cantos daily with Mary, striving to win her back to an interest in matters remote from their recent sorrow. He had himself found a fresh delight in the bright and chivalrous pages of Boccaccio. "He is," said Shelley, "in a high sense of the word a poet, and his language has the rhythm and harmony of verse. . . . What descriptions of nature are those in his little introductions to every new day! It is the morning of life, stripped of that mist of familiarity which makes it obscure to us. Boccaccio seems to me to have possessed a deep sense of the fair ideal of human life, considered in its social relations. His more serious theories of love agree especially with mine. He often expresses things lightly too, which have serious meanings of a very beautiful kind. He is a moral casuist, the opposite of the Christian, stoical, ready-made, and worldly system of morals." † But the most important addition made in the autumn of 1819 to the objects of Shelley's literary homage or enthusiasm was Calderon, to the study of whom he was led on by Mrs. Gisborne. Early in September, Charles Clairmont, who had been for a year or more in Spain, visited the Shelleys on his way to Vienna; the visit extended over two months; and for a time Shelley engaged him in reading Spanish all day long.‡ Borne away by the winged poetry and the ardour of heroic sentiment in Calderon, Shelley did not feel his imperfect grasp of the robust realities of life, and dared even to compare the Spanish dramatist with Shakespeare. The poetry in its foreign garb again and again solicited him

\* Livorno, August (probably 22), 1819.

† To Leigh Hunt: Livorno, September 27, 1819.

‡ Charles Clairmont visited the Shelleys from about September 4 to November 10, 1819.



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to clothe it in English speech, and not many months before his death, he rendered, with that fidelity in freedom at which he aimed in his work as translator, some admirable scenes from the "Magico Prodigioso." But translation from such a poet as Calderon could ill content Shelley; it seemed that at best he was throwing over the "perfect and glowing forms" of the original the "grey veil" of his own words. "I am bathing myself," he wrote to Mr. Gisborne in November, 1820, "in the light and odour of the flowery and starry *Autos*;" and it is somewhat remarkable to find his imaginative delight so little troubled by the religious ardours of the great Catholic poet.\* At Leghorn, in 1819, he seems rather to have occupied himself with Calderon's secular dramas. "I have read about twelve of his plays," he wrote to Peacock in September. "Some of them certainly deserve to be ranked amongst the grandest and most perfect productions of the human mind. He exceeds all modern dramatists, with the exception of Shakespeare, whom he resembles, however, in the depth of thought and subtlety of imagination of his writings, and in the rare power of interweaving delicate and powerful comic traits with the most tragical situations, without diminishing their interest. I rate him far above Beaumont and Fletcher."

With high creative minds one effort seems sometimes to leave behind a force and impetus which must expend themselves in a second. We might imagine that when Shelley had completed the second and third acts of "Prometheus Unbound" he would have paused, or for a while have slept upon the wing. But it was not so. From one creative mood he passed immediately into another. And, as if his imagina-

\* In this resembling Auguste Comte. In "A Defence of Poetry," Shelley expresses his maturer feeling: "Calderon, in his religious '*Autos*,' has attempted to fulfil some of the high conditions of dramatic representation neglected by Shakespeare; such as the establishing a relation between the drama and religion, and the accommodating them to music and dancing; but he omits the observation of conditions still more important, and more is lost than gained by the substitution of the rigidly defined and ever-repeated idealisms of a distorted superstition for the living impersonations of the truth of human passion."

tion found sufficient relief through a change in the direction of its activity, he turned from the visions of the "Prometheus," impersonating his own apprehensions of the beautiful and the just, to a dramatic study of human character and passion in tragic circumstances. While at Leghorn, in May of the preceding year, he had read a manuscript narrative of the appalling story of the wrongs and the vengeance of Beatrice Cenci; Mrs. Shelley had copied the manuscript (May 25, 1818) before she proceeded to the Baths of Lucca.\* On his arrival at Rome, he found that the story of the Cenci was universally known, and could not be mentioned in Italian society without awakening "a deep and breathless interest." This profound national interest in the tale of horror first suggested to Shelley the conception of its fitness for dramatic treatment. On April 22, he and Mary visited the Colonna Palace, and gazed at the alleged portrait of Beatrice attributed to Guido, in which simplicity and dignity are united with the pathos of an inexpressible sorrow.† "There is a fixed and pale composure upon the features," writes Shelley; "she seems sad and stricken down in spirit, yet the despair thus expressed is lightened by the patience of gentleness." A few days later (May 11), they wandered through the ancient dwelling of the Cenci family, a "vast and gloomy pile of feudal architecture," in an obscure quarter of Rome, hard by the gate of the Ghetto. By May 14, as an entry in Mary's journal shows, Shelley was at work upon

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\* This fact, recorded in her journal, seems to have been forgotten by Mrs. Shelley, when she stated in her note to the "Cenci" that it was in Rome, in 1819, that a friend put into Shelley's hands the old manuscript account of the story of the Cenci.

† So says Mrs. Shelley in her journal, and Shelley, in his preface to the "Cenci," speaks of the portrait as being in the Colonna Palace. It is now in the Barberini Palace. The family of the Cenci was a branch of the house of Colonna. A daughter of the last Prince Colonna married the Prince Barberini, and thus, it was said, the portrait of Beatrice came into the Barberini family. See Mrs. Jameson's "Diary of an Ennuyée," p. 154. "Whilst writing it," says Medwin, "he told me that he heard in the street the oft-repeated cry, 'Cenci, cenci!' which he at first thought the echo of his own soul, but soon learnt was one of the cries of Rome—'cenci' meaning 'old rags.'"

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his tragedy. The union of gentleness with heroic strength and energy in woman had for Shelley's imagination a peculiar attraction; the tyranny of evil power and the warfare in the world between hatred and love aroused his highest spiritual ardour. It was, as De Quincey has said, the strife between darkness and light in the story of the Cenci which fascinated Shelley; its horror was to be ennobled or counterpoised by its piteousness and beauty. The drama, as he conceived it, is not so much a tragedy of unnatural lust as of monstrous and unnatural hate. A deed which should bring two human creatures into union most sacred and equal, becomes by a hideous inversion the crowning feat of tyrannous malignity, the ground of deepest loathing and deadliest alienation. That Shelley should have had power to disengage his mind from the visions and abstractions which possessed him while writing the "Prometheus Unbound," and should have handled a story of actual human passion with so much imaginative vigour gives us some measure of the strength of his maturing genius. The year 1819 was his *Annus mirabilis*, and in one year to have created such poems as the "Prometheus" and the "Cenci" is an achievement without parallel in English poetry since Shakespeare lived and wrote.

In the death of his son, Shelley's work upon the story of the Cenci had a mournful interruption; but when away from the scene of his anguish and cruel death-bed watching, he sought a refuge in art from the pain of recollection, and in his sunny "tower" of the Villa Valsovano made swift progress with his tragedy. In no other instance did he take counsel with any one as to the conduct or evolution of any one of his greater poems; but in the case of the "Cenci," perhaps because he had at first urged the subject on Mary as one fitted for a tragedy, perhaps because he desired to employ every means to lift her out of despondency, from day to day he talked over the arrangement of the scenes with his wife. The drama, in spite of its painful subject, pleased her better than did some

of his poems which were freer in fantasy and more remote from human interest. To Peacock he communicated the story contained in the manuscript, but his friend's suggestions as to the proper mode of treatment arrived too late, and when they arrived they did not meet Shelley's approval. The excitement of composition told injuriously on Shelley's health, keeping up the pain in his side, he says, as sticks do a fire. Within three months the whole had been accomplished. On Sunday, August 8, he brought the first rough draft to an end (and the last lines uttered by Beatrice were regarded by their author with peculiar affection); during some later days of the same month he was engaged in copying and correcting the poem. At Leghorn was a printing-office—that of Masi—from which several English books had been issued on terms more reasonable than those of London houses.\* Here two hundred and fifty copies of the "Cenci" were struck off in small quarto, and were conveyed to England to be sold by the Ollier brothers. It was Shelley's wish that a print from Guido's portrait of Beatrice should form a frontispiece to his volume; but the cost of the engraving, ascertained for him by Miss Curran, far exceeded what it was in his power to undertake. The tragedy was dedicated in words of affectionate esteem to Leigh Hunt. "I have written something," he tells Hunt (September 3), "and finished it, different from anything else, and a new attempt for me; and I mean to dedicate it to you. I should not have done so without your approbation, but I asked your picture last night and it smiled assent."

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But it was not Shelley's intention that his tragedy, although printed, should be immediately published. Written with a special view to dramatic effect, and therefore eschewing "what is commonly called 'mere poetry,'" the "Cenci," Shelley hoped, might be set forth on the English stage as an acting

\* Among others, Eustace's "Classical Tour through Italy" (4 vols.), 1817. I have no positive evidence that Masi was Shelley's printer, but it seems morally certain that to Masi he would go.

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drama. Accordingly, when despatching the printed copies to Ollier in October, he directed his publisher to keep the box unopened, or, if by necessity it were opened, to abstain from examining the contents. Hunt would inform Ollier in a general way respecting the nature of the new volume, and in the course of the winter directions would be sent for its publication. Meanwhile Peacock was to procure, if possible, the presentation of the play at Covent Garden. "The principal character, Beatrice," wrote Shelley, "is precisely fitted for Miss O'Neill, and it might even seem written for her (God forbid that I should ever see her play it—it would tear my nerves to pieces), and in all respects it is fitted only for Covent Garden. The chief male character, I confess, I should be very unwilling that any one but Kean should play—that is impossible, and I must be contented with an inferior actor." The author's name was to be kept a profound secret; this Shelley held to be essential to the success of his attempt, for his public enemies, he believed, were many, and there was one private enemy whose malice, as he supposed, would spare no exertion to procure him an injury—"his sister-in-law alone," writes Mary Shelley to Miss Curran, "would hire enough people to damn it."\* The "Cenci" was not presented at Covent Garden; its subject, as Shelley surmised might be the case, inevitably excluded it from the English public stage; nor had the writer, unversed in the secrets of theatrical effect, known how to fit an acting play for the boards.†

The "Cenci" was not ranked among his highest works by

\* Leghorn, September 18, 1819.

† The "Cenci" was offered to Covent Garden Theatre and to Drury Lane, and was refused. "It was refused by Covent Garden," writes Mary Shelley to Miss Curran (January 19, 1820); "and now that Miss O'Neill is married, I do not think it could be brought out with effect anywhere." And Shelley to Ollier (March 13, 1820), "My friends here have great hopes that the 'Cenci' will succeed as a publication. It was refused at Drury Lane, although expressly written for theatrical exhibition, on a plea of the story being too horrible. I believe it singularly fitted for the stage." It has been suggested that the play was offered only to Covent Garden Theatre, and that by a slip of the pen Shelley wrote Drury Lane.

its author. To "Prometheus Unbound" he assigned—and justly—a far higher place. The manuscript of the "Prometheus" was now on its way to England (September 12), in the hands of Mr. Gisborne, who had undertaken the journey home in the hope of obtaining some suitable employment for his step-son, Henry Reveley. "Julian and Maddalo" had been sent in mid-August to Hunt, with a view to its publication, but a publication without the writer's name. Some months since had appeared the little volume containing "Rosalind and Helen," the "Lines written on the Euganean Hills," and the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty."\* It was a gratification to Shelley to hear that his "eclogue" was a favourite with Charles Lamb, whose "Rosamund Gray" had given him a high sense of the writer's familiarity with the deepest and sweetest parts of our human nature. In the *Examiner*, Leigh Hunt also had warmly commended the "Rosalind and Helen." "Mr. Shelley," he wrote, "seems to look at Nature with such an earnest and intense love, that at last, if she does not break her ancient silence, she returns him look for look. She seems to say to him, 'You know me, if others do not.' For him, if for any poet that ever lived, the beauty of the external world has an answering heart, and the very whispers of the wind a meaning. Things, with mankind in general, are mere words: they have only a few paltry commonplaces about them, and see only the surface of those. To Mr. Shelley all that exists, exists indeed—colour, sound, motion, thought, sentiment, the lofty and the humble, great and small, detail and generality—from the beauties of a blade of grass or the most evanescent tint of a cloud, to the heart of man which he would elevate, and the mysterious spirit of the universe which he would seat

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\* It is perhaps worth noting as a curious fact that in 1818 Shelley had for critic of his "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" a Governor-General of India—the Marquis of Hastings. The poem, which did not bear Shelley's name, had been reprinted from the *Examiner* in the *Calcutta Times*. See Lord Hastings's letter in a volume entitled "The Bengalee" (Smith, Elder, and Co., 1829), where the hymn is reprinted, its author being unknown to the writer of "The Bengalee."

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 VII. 'eclogue,' said Shelley, in acknowledgment of this review,  
 June, 1819- "gave me great pleasure; indeed, my great stimulus in writing  
 Jan. 1820. is to have the approbation of those who feel kindly toward  
 me. The rest is mere duty."

"We shall quit Leghorn in about a fortnight," Mary wrote to Miss Curran on September 18; "but as yet we do not know where to go." A few days later, Shelley, having Charles Clairmont as his companion, set off for Florence, and there engaged lodgings for six months. Travel was now a difficulty with Mary, but it was decided that she should journey by slow stages in the carriage; and on the morning after her husband's return—the last day of the month—much regretted by Mrs. Gisborne and by Oscar, the demonstrative dog, Shelley, Mary, and Claire bade farewell to the Villa Valsovano, and were on the road to Pisa. On October 2, they had taken possession of their apartment in Florence.

Florence, beautiful in situation, beautiful in its public buildings, rich in its galleries of art, and rich in the memories of a noble past, could not fail to prove a fortunate environment for Shelley's spirit. But the months of late autumn and early winter made clear that it was ill fitted to promote his physical comfort. The keen, dry, piercing winds that sweep from the Apennines, says Medwin, acted injuriously upon his sensitive nerves; and if his chief ailment, as has been alleged, was of a nephritic nature, the water of Florence, impregnated with lime, would tend to increase his suffering.† His general health, indeed, seemed to improve, but the pain in his side, from which he had already endured much, now became aggravated and constant. Yet, in spite of physical discomfort, Shelley had many delightful hours. "I like the Cascine very much," he wrote to Mrs. Gisborne, "where I often walk alone, watching the leaves and the rising

\* The *Examiner*, May 9, 1819.

† Rossetti, "Memoir of Shelley," p. 92.

and falling of the Arno." The prospect from the Boboli Gardens even in winter filled him with delight. Florence below, a smokeless city; the valleys beyond, gently unfolding themselves from the Apennines; the remote summits clad with snow; nearer, the villa-dotted hills; and Arno in the midst full with the winter rains.\*

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But for Shelley the special joy of residence in Florence lay in his visits to its collections of works of art, and above all in contemplating its examples of ancient sculpture. The ideality of the art of sculpture—each object presenting beauty or passion in an immortal abstraction from all that is temporary and accidental—appealed in a peculiar degree to Shelley's imagination. Two years later, when paying a brief visit to Florence, he spent a morning in presence of the Niche and a favourite Apollo. "All worldly thoughts and cares," he wrote, "seem to vanish from before the sublime emotions such spectacles create; and I am deeply impressed with the great difference of happiness enjoyed by those who live at a distance from these incarnations of all that the finest minds have conceived of beauty, and those who can resort to their company at pleasure. What should we think if we were forbidden to read the great writers who have left us their works? And yet to be forbidden to live at Florence or Rome, is an evil of the same kind and hardly of less magnitude."† "Go to the gallery," Mary Shelley enters in her journal for October 11, and on October 13 and 20, "Shelley spends the morning at the gallery," "Shelley visits the galleries." On the occasion of these or subsequent visits, he added to that series of "Notes on Sculpture" which he had begun at Rome. These are not the comments of one skilled in the *technique* of the art, nor of one who, like Lessing, had thought out for himself its fundamental laws. They are the criticisms of a poet, who endeavours to penetrate to the centre of emotional life in each

\* "View from the Pitti Gardens," Shelley's Prose Works, vol. iii. pp. 50-51.

† To Mrs. Shelley, August 1, 1821.



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marble form, to catch the spirit which flows through the limbs and animates the countenance. To observe in statuary and painting the degree in which, and the rules according to which, "that ideal beauty of which we have so intense yet so obscure an apprehension" can be realized in external forms, was, said Shelley, one of his chief objects in Italy. "These things," he had written from Rome, "are best spoken of when the mind has drunk in the spirit of their forms; and little indeed can I, who must devote no more than a few months to the contemplation of them, hope to know or feel of their profound beauty." \* To drink in the spirit of their forms—this was what Shelley desired as he stood long at gaze before the monuments of ancient art in the galleries of Florence. In the fragment "On the Medusa of Leonardo da Vinci," we have an example of his power to translate the impressions derived from pictorial art into poetry.

Before leaving Leghorn, Shelley had grieved over Mary's continued depression of spirits. On November 12, when, after only two hours' suffering, she lay at ease with a little newborn boy by her side, her husband had the happiness of observing a new light of content in her eyes. "It seems a wonder," he wrote next day to Leigh Hunt, "that she stays in bed. The babe is also quite well, and has begun to suck. You may imagine that this is a great relief and a great comfort to me, amongst all my misfortunes, past, present, and to come. . . . Poor Mary begins (for the first time) to look a little consoled. For we have spent, as you may imagine, a miserable five months." The babe, who thus was the bringer of joy to his parents, was small, healthy, and pretty, not unlike their lost William. Three weeks after his birth, Mary Shelley wrote, "The little boy is nearly three times as big as when he was born; he thrives well and cries little, and is now

\* To Peacock, March 23, 1819. While at Rome, Claire had visited Canova's studio with Marianna Dionigi. We do not know whether Shelley was of the party.

taking a right-down earnest sleep, with all his heart in his shut eyes." On January 25, 1820, he was baptized by Mr. Harding, an English clergyman, and received his father's name, Percy, to which was added Florence, the name of his place of birth. Comforting his mother's heart after her affliction of 1819, he continued to fulfil the promise of his birth, and remained her centre of joy and comfort through all losses and trials to the close of her life.

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While thus in Shelley's domestic life a new happiness began to dawn, he was deeply moved with grief and indignation by tidings of public affairs in England. On August 16 the great Reform meeting held in St. Peter's Field, Manchester, had been dispersed by yeomanry and hussars; in the attempt to arrest the popular leaders some sabre-wounds had been dealt by the cavalry, and, beside a special constable and one of the yeomanry killed by a brickbat, four persons had died from injuries received on that unfortunate day. Radical journalists had dignified the affair with the title of the "Manchester Massacre;" the sacred rights of the people, they declared, had been violated; a new series of dragonnades had commenced.\* While at Leghorn, Shelley had heard the news of "Peterloo," and he feared that this might be for England the beginning of evils like those of the French Revolution. His chief desire was that the liberal movement in English politics should be kept within constitutional lines, and should be unstained by blood-shedding or violence. "These," he wrote to Peacock (September 9), "are, as it were, the distant thunders of the terrible storm which is approaching. The tyrants here, as in the French Revolution, have first shed blood. May their execrable lessons not be learnt with equal docility!" It

\* Mrs. Gisborne, in a letter to Mrs. Shelley, dated "London, August 23, 1820," writes, "Mr. Hogg laughs at the Manchester massacre, and says that it was neither foreseen nor intended. He is personally acquainted with some of the principal actors, whom he describes as the most peaceable, good-natured people in the world. They were panic-struck, he says, having been worked upon by the most alarming anonymous notices of plots and plans of assassination."

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was the hardships and sufferings of the industrious poor that especially claimed his sympathy, and he thought of publishing for them a series of popular songs which should inspire them with heart and hope, and perhaps awaken and direct the imagination of the reformers. For one hour gazing heavenward he could sing his song of the spirits—

“Palace-roof of cloudless nights!  
 Paradise of golden lights!  
 Deep, immeasurable, vast;”

but the next hour, with eye fixed on the bowed backs and cheerless faces of toilers in England, he must grieve, though not as one who sorrows without hope—

“Have ye leisure, comfort, calm,  
 Shelter, food, love’s gentle balm?  
 Or what is it ye buy so dear  
 With your pain and with your fear?”

The “Songs and Poems for the Men of England,” written in 1819, remained unpublished until several years after Shelley’s death, when the first great battle for reform had been fought and won.

In more direct connection with the Manchester “massacre” was written the admirable “Mask of Anarchy.” Shelley hoped that Leigh Hunt might see fit to give it a place in the *Examiner*. “I did not insert it,” Hunt wrote, “because I thought that the public at large had not become sufficiently discerning to do justice to the sincerity and kind-heartedness of the spirit that walked in this flaming robe of verse.” The poem is interesting as an occasional piece mediating between Shelley’s visions of the future, such as those embodied in the “Prometheus Unbound” and his political pamphlets. The ideals of man’s better life, which at times appear so vague and unreal in the imagery of the “Prometheus,” are here conceived with all the definiteness and limitations imposed by

reality. "What art thou, Freedom?" asks Shelley; and he replies—

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"For the labourer thou art bread,  
And a comely table spread,  
From his daily labour come,  
In a neat and happy home,"

This, with food and light for the spirit as well as the body :—

"Science, and Poetry, and Thought,  
Are thy lamps; they make the lot  
Of the dwellers in a cot  
So serene they curse it not."

To attain this happier life in the future, Shelley exhorts his countrymen to ways of peace. If violence be displayed against them, let their bearing be resolute and calm—the bearing, if need be, of the martyrs of public order; and let the laws of England be the arbiters of their contention :—

"The old laws of England—they  
Whose reverend heads with age are grey,  
Children of a wiser day;  
And whose solemn voice must be  
Thine own echo—Liberty."

These are words which accord little with the conception of Shelley as a rash, revolutionary propagandist; but they are in strict agreement with his prose utterances on political subjects, with the boyish pamphlets addressed to the Irish people, and with the maturer "Proposal for putting Reform to the Vote." "The great thing to do," Shelley wrote in November to Leigh Hunt, "is to hold the balance between popular impatience and tyrannical obstinacy; to inculcate with fervour both the right of resistance and the duty of forbearance. You know my principles incite me to take all the good I can get in politics, for ever aspiring to something more. I am one of those whom nothing will fully satisfy, but who are ready to be partially satisfied in all that is practicable. We shall see."

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It was, as Shelley believed, in a peculiar degree a poet's duty to sustain the hopes and aspirations of men in their movement of advance, and at the same time to endeavour to hold their passions in check by presenting high ideals, and showing that the better life of society is not to be won out of the air by sudden and desperate snatching. And that a poet should use his powers to damp man's ardour for what is best, and to maintain in permanence the evil *status quo*—this seemed to Shelley to be the capital crime of high treason against the spirit of truth and justice. Wordsworth had been a master with Shelley's imagination in youth; but even when "Alastor" was published, Shelley believed that Wordsworth was a deserter from the cause of liberty to which his early writings had been dedicated.\* The support which the elder poet had recently given at the parliamentary election to the representatives of the house of Lowther, in opposition to Brougham, made him conspicuous among men of letters as an antagonist of the Liberal party. In 1819 was published "Peter Bell," a poem written twenty years earlier, and containing some of Wordsworth's most characteristic and admirable writing. In a flippant notice by Leigh Hunt it was described as a "didactic horror of Mr. Wordsworth's, founded on the bewitching principles of fear, bigotry, and diseased impulse." Hunt's friend, J. Hamilton Reynolds, had made its appearance the occasion of a parody chiefly directed against Wordsworth's alleged puerility of style and inordinate self-esteem. What struck Shelley as most lamentable was Wordsworth's defection, as he imagined, from those faiths and hopes and charities which sustain a poet's genius in its onward flight; and he believed that, as it were by way of judicial punishment for this defection, a cloud of dulness had settled down upon the poet's heart and brain. Thus Wordsworth's career, as conceived by Shelley, became a type and representative of the self-betrayal of genius to the stupefying in-

\* See the Sonnet to Wordsworth in the "Alastor" volume.

fluences of the world—custom, convention, tyranny, hypocrisy; his sensibility, at first strong though circumscribed, Shelley maintained, had gradually hardened; his understanding, at one time penetrating, if not wide-ranging, had been stricken with panic and perverted. With such views Shelley wrote rapidly in the latter days of October his fantastic satire—half-jest, but whole-earnest—"Peter Bell the Third;" and on November 2 Mary's transcript of the poem was posted to Hunt, with a request that he should desire Ollier to print and publish it immediately. The author's name was for the present to be concealed; Tom Brown the younger, that is, Tom Moore, as author of the "Fudge Family," received the honour of a dedication signed by "Miching Mallecho."\* Nothing written by Shelley in 1819 could fail to possess considerable interest, and in its central idea, apart from the application of that idea to Wordsworth, "Peter Bell the Third" expresses an important truth. Yet Shelley said well in this satire—

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"It is a dangerous invasion  
When poets criticize; their station  
Is to delight;"

and we cannot regret that a piece of criticism, more than half unjust in its reference to Wordsworth, remained unprinted until that great poet had won the mastery over the spirits of a generation of Englishmen which was his due.

The unhappy affair of "Peterloo" moved Shelley hardly more than did certain attacks on liberty of the press, made in the summer and autumn of 1819. Richard Carlile, a well-known publisher of deistical and republican writings, was put upon his trial on October 12 for a blasphemous libel, consisting of certain passages contained in Paine's "Age of Reason." The

\* Thomas Brown, Esq., the younger, has the mysterious letters "H. F." attached to his name, probably "Historian of the Fudges," in ridicule of the "P. L." (Poet Laureate) following Southey's name in Wordsworth's dedication, which Hunt suggested might mean "Precious Looby."

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prosecution did not proceed, the Attorney-General declared, from any hostility to freedom of printing, nor from any wish to suppress calm and philosophical inquiry, but from a sense of the duty of government to protect religion when coarsely insulted and reviled. Carlile pleaded in his own cause, but without success. A month later he received heavy sentence for two offences—the second being the republication of Palmer's "Principles of Nature"—in a fine of £1500, and three years' imprisonment. Shelley heard of the conviction (the sentence was yet unpronounced) early in November, and instantly addressed to Leigh Hunt a letter in five sheets on the subject of the trial. It is an Englishman's privilege, he argues, to be tried by a jury of his peers. Who were Mr. Carlile's peers? Christians? Surely not. And why make a poor bookseller the victim of orthodoxy? Was Mr. Carlile the only deist? Or was not Sir William Drummond also an adversary of Christianity? Were not Mr. Godwin, Mr. Burdon, Mr. Bentham, deists? Did not government undertake the prosecution less in the interest of truth than to gratify the multitude? "Tyrants, after all, are only a kind of demagogues. They must flatter the Great Beast." Thus, not without some inconsistency, reasons Shelley, the sacred People, who presented so noble an aspect when assembled in Manchester to applaud the flattery of Orator Hunt, become "the Great Beast" when rendered indignant by the indecencies of Paine's commentary on the story of the birth of Jesus Christ—a story entwined with many of their purest and tenderest feelings.

"I have deserted the odorous gardens of literature," Shelley wrote to Mr. and Mrs. Gisborne on November 6, "to journey across the great sandy desert of politics; not, as you may imagine, without the hope of finding some enchanted paradise. In all probability, I shall be overwhelmed by one of the tempestuous columns which are for ever traversing, with the speed of a storm and the confusion of a chaos, that pathless wilderness. You meanwhile will be lamenting in some happy

oasis that I do not return.”\* “I consider poetry very subordinate to moral and political science,” he had written to Peacock in the opening of the year, “and, if I were well, certainly I would aspire to the latter, for I can conceive a great work, embodying the discoveries of all ages, and harmonizing the contending creeds by which mankind have been ruled.”† Shelley did not dare to attempt such a work as this; but he designed to produce a treatise occasional, and at the same time philosophical, which might serve the cause of liberal reform by appealing from the passions to the reason of men. In December, this intended volume had been begun, and by May, 1820, it was in great part achieved. “Do you know any bookseller,” Shelley asks Hunt (May 26, 1820), “who would publish for me an octavo volume, entitled ‘A Philosophical View of Reform’? It is boldly but temperately written, and I think readable. It is intended for a kind of standard book for the philosophical reformers politically considered, like Jeremy Bentham’s something, and perhaps more systematic. I would send it sheet by sheet. Will you ask and think for me?” The “Philosophical View of Reform” was never published, but happily the treatise, occupying some two hundred pages of a small note-book, has been preserved in Shelley’s manuscript. It is a first draft, with many cancelled sentences and interlineations, and unhappily it remains unfinished; yet it sets forth the writer’s opinions on political subjects with sufficient fulness, and makes us acquainted with the side of his mind presented to actual politics as no published writing of Shelley’s has done.

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\* “This,” Shelley adds, in apology for his over-figurative language, “is out-Calderonizing Muley.” Muley is the Moorish general of “El Principe Constante.”

† Naples, January 26, 1819. A work of a somewhat less extended scope was contemplated by Shelley when he published “Prometheus Unbound.” In the preface he writes, “Should I live to accomplish what I purpose, that is, produce a systematical history of what appear to me to be the genuine elements of human society, let not the advocates of injustice and superstition flatter themselves that I should take Æschylus rather than Plato as my model.”



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Opening with what its author describes as “a slight sketch of the hopes and aspirations of the human race,” with reference to intellectual and political freedom, “since the obliteration of the Greek Republics”—a sketch which includes the Reformation, the Eighteenth-Century Illumination, the French Revolution, the progress and condition of society in England, France, Spain, Germany, the United States of America—Shelley’s essay passes on to consider somewhat in detail the aspect of contemporary affairs in Great Britain. The outburst of nineteenth-century literature in his own country seemed to Shelley to be the prophecy of great social and political change.\* That some such change was impending and had become inevitable, was already widely felt. Shelley’s purpose was to investigate the causes and object of this change; its practicability and necessity; the state of parties as related to it; and the “probable, possible, and desirable mode in which it should take place.” The people of England, he maintained, were destitute and miserable, ill clothed, ill fed, ill educated; they had come to recognize their own evil state, and were impatient to amend it. In Shelley’s opinion a main cause of their misery was the modern device of public credit, by means of which a vast series of spurious money transactions was effected by persons whose wealth was no more than fraudulent paper. “Of this nature are all such transactions of companies and banks as consist in the circulation of promissory notes to a greater extent than the actual property possessed by those whose names they bear. They have the effect of augmenting the prices of provision, and of benefiting at the expense of the community the speculators in this traffic. One of the vaunted effects of this system is to increase the national industry; that is, to increase the labours of the poor, and those luxuries which they supply the rich; to make a manufacturer † work sixteen

\* The noble passage which brings to a close Shelley’s “Defence of Poetry,” is transferred from this part of the “Philosophical View of Reform” to the later-written essay.

† *I.e.*, as we now say, an operative or artisan.

hours where he had only worked eight; to turn children into lifeless and bloodless machines at an age when otherwise they would be at play before the cottage doors of their parents; to augment indefinitely the proportion of those who enjoy the profit of the labour of others as compared with those who exercise this labour." Hence has arisen a new aristocracy founded on fraud, as the old aristocracy had had its basis in force. The old aristocracy of great landowners and honest merchants possess "a certain generosity and refinement of manners and opinion, which, although neither philosophy nor virtue," has been an acknowledged substitute for them, making respected those venerable names. "The other aristocracy—attorneys, excisemen, directors, government pensioners, usurers, stock-jobbers, with their dependents and descendants," are "a set of pelting wretches, in whose employment there is nothing to exercise, even to their distortion, the more majestic forces of the soul. Though at the bottom it is all trick, there is something frank and magnificent in the chivalrous disdain of infamy of a gentleman. There is something to which—until you see through the base falsehood upon which all inequality is founded—it is difficult for the imagination to refuse its respect in the faithful and direct dealings of the substantial merchant. But in the habits and lives of this new aristocracy, created out of an increase in public calamities, whose existence must be terminated by their termination, there is nothing to qualify our disapprobation. They eat and drink and sleep, and in the intervals of these actions they cringe and lie." And as this class fattens, the toiler grows lean and miserable. Buffeted and afflicted in this world, what can he anticipate in the world to come? "The gleams of hope which speak of Paradise seem, like the flames of Milton's Hell, only to make darkness visible."

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Chief among contemporary social evils, weighing down the people of England, as it seemed to Shelley, was "the unjust distribution, which, under the form of the National Debt, was

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"To let the ghost of gold  
 Take from toil a thousandfold  
 More than e'er its substance could,  
 In the tyrannies of old."

The so-called National Debt—"chiefly contracted in two libetricide wars undertaken by the privileged classes of the country, the first for the purpose of tyrannizing over one portion of their subjects, the second in order to extinguish the resolute spirit of attaining their rights in another country"—was really no debt of the nation, but a debt contracted by the whole mass of the privileged classes to one particular portion of these classes. "The labour which this money represents, and that which is represented by the money wrung for purposes of the same detestable character out of the people since the commencement of the American war, would, if properly employed, have covered our land with monuments of architecture exceeding the sumptuousness and the beauty of Egypt and Athens; it might have made every peasant's cottage a little paradise of comfort, with every convenience desirable . . . neat tables and chairs and good beds, and a collection of useful books; and our fleet, manned by sailors well-paid and well-clothed, might have kept watch round this glorious island against the less enlightened nations which assuredly would have envied its prosperity."

One of the first acts of a reformed Parliament, according to Shelley, would be to produce an effectual scheme for compelling the privileged classes to compromise the debt, misnamed "national," among themselves. Tribunals should be created before which the claims of the fundholders should be laid. There are two descriptions of property which are entitled, says Shelley, to two very different measures of forbearance

and regard. "Labour, industry, economy, skill, genius, or any similar powers honourably and innocently exerted, are the foundations of one description of property. All true political institutions ought to defend every man in the exercise of his discretion with respect to property so acquired. . . . But there is another species of property which has its foundation in usurpation, or imposture, or violence, without which, by the nature of things, immense aggregations of property could never have been accumulated." Such property, held in the funds, is a burden on all honest toilers borne on behalf of the luxury of a few who live in idleness, and for sake of the public weal its amount must be substantially reduced.

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As to reform of the system of representation, Shelley maintained that, abstractedly considered, universal suffrage is the ideal for all free nations. But any sudden attempt to establish universal suffrage in England would inevitably produce a premature attempt at republican government—an attempt which might fail, or which might give rise to a civil war. If the present government were willing to grant even a very moderate measure of reform, it were wiser to accept the boon as a provisional, though not a final, gain. Bentham and other writers had urged the admission of women to the right of suffrage. To Shelley this proposal appeared at least premature. "Should my opinion be the result of despondency," he adds, "the writer of these pages would be the last to withhold his vote from any system which might tend to an equal and full development of the capacities of all living beings." Vote by ballot was opposed as decidedly by Shelley as by Wordsworth. It seemed to him a process "too mechanical." All that creates common sympathies, all that excites a mass of generous, enlarged, and popular sentiment, all that arouses the imagination, all that helps to direct public opinion to its genuine purposes, should be cherished and preserved among us; and the method of secret voting tends to reduce a human being, with his emotions and his

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hopes, his courage and his fears, to a mere vote-recording instrument.

“The true patriot,” Shelley writes, “will endeavour to enlighten and to unite the nation, and animate it with enthusiasm and confidence. For this purpose he will be indefatigable in promulgating political truth. He will endeavour to rally round one standard the divided friends of liberty, and make them forget the subordinate objects with regard to which they differ by appealing to that respecting which they are all agreed. He will promote such open confederations among men of principle and spirit as may tend to make their intention and their efforts converge to a common centre. He will discourage all secret associations which have a tendency by making the nation’s will develop itself in a partial and premature manner to cause tumult and confusion. He will urge the necessity of exciting the people frequently to exercise the right of assembling in such limited numbers as that all present may be actual parties to the measures of the day. Lastly, if circumstances had collected a considerable number as at Manchester on the memorable 16th of August; if the tyrants send their troops to fire upon them, or cut them down unless they disperse; he will exhort them peaceably to defy the danger, and to expect without resistance the onset of the cavalry, and wait with folded arms the event of the fire of the artillery, and receive with unshrinking bosoms the bayonets of charging battalions. Men are every day persuaded to incur greater perils for a manifest advantage. And this not because active resistance is not justifiable, but because in this instance temperance and courage would produce greater advantages than the most decisive victory.”

Abolition of the National Debt; disbanding of standing armies; cessation of tithes (due regard, however, being had to vested interests); the attainment of absolute freedom for opinions and their public expression; the rendering of justice cheap, speedy, and secure;—these were the chief ends, as

Shelley conceived, which should be aimed at by a reformed Parliament. Such were the immediate objects towards which the nation should aspire. But Shelley gazed forward to the remotest future, and imagined a time when equality in possessions might be realized as "the last result of the utmost refinements of civilization." We derive courage, tranquility, and grandeur of soul, he says, from contemplating ideals at present wholly unattainable, and thus we quicken our hearts with "delusions which are no delusions." From such dreams and visions we return to the actual; and "it becomes us with patience and resolution to apply ourselves to accommodating theories to immediate practice." Events in England seemed to portend some great convulsion unless a moderate reform were speedily effected. "Everything is preparing for a bloody struggle," Shelley wrote to Mr. Gisborne (November 6), "in which, if the ministers succeed, they will assuredly diminish the interest on the National Debt, for no combination of the heaviest tyranny can raise the taxes for its payment. If the people conquer, the public creditor will equally suffer; for it is monstrous to imagine that they will submit to the perpetual inheritance of a double aristocracy. They will perhaps find some crown and church lands, and appropriate the tithes to make a kind of compensation to the public creditor. They will confiscate the estates of their political enemies. But all will not pay a tenth part of their debt." Others at this time beside Shelley believed that a great crisis had come in the history of our country. "This age," wrote Southey, "like that of the Reformation, seems to be one of the great climacterics of the world;" and the tendency of the age, he believed, was towards revolution, not in government alone, but in religion and in the institutions of property." It was at this moment, when Shelley was engaged on his "View of Reform," that the elder poet began that series of prose "Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society," published ten years later, in which, amid some errors of ignorance and

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prejudice, is embodied not a little of his generous ardour and his mature and temperate wisdom.

"These are not times in which one has much spirit for writing poetry, although there is a keen air in them that sharpens the wits of men, and makes them imagine vividly even in the midst of despondence"—so wrote Shelley from Florence to his cousin, Thomas Medwin.\* But in truth it was not possible to silence within him the spirit of song. In hours when he did not feel himself capable of pure creative work, he translated, into admirably lithe and graceful English verse, Euripides' satyric drama "The Cyclops." No rendering from Greek literature can possibly be more animated or more strong in its lightness. Now also it was, and here in Florence, that the fourth act of "Prometheus Unbound"—a sublime after-thought—came into existence. The joy of Prometheus and Asia cannot be bounded by humanity; it overflows and fills the wide universe, finding passionate utterance in the amœbæan lyrics of the enamoured Earth and Moon. Yet, once again as the poem closes, it must needs return to man, declaring in a few lines of high intention the sum of the whole matter:—

"To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;  
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;  
To defy Power which seems omnipotent;  
To love and bear; to hope till Hope creates  
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;  
Neither to change nor falter nor repent;  
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be  
Good, great, and joyous, beautiful and free;  
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory."

In December, the last act of "Prometheus Unbound" was thus triumphantly brought to a close. Several weeks earlier, on a day when the tempestuous west wind was collecting the vapours which pour down the autumnal rains, Shelley con-

\* January 17, 1820.

ceived and in great part wrote, in a wood that skirted the Arno, that ode in which there is a union of lyrical breadth with lyrical intensity unsurpassed in English song—the “Ode to the West Wind.” At sunset on that day the expected tempest came, attended by the magnificent thunder and lightning peculiar to the Cisalpine regions.\* The poem is the clarion-cry of hope in the presence of tumultuous ruin and inevitable decay.

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“Spring come to you, at the farthest  
In the very end of harvest,”

was the marriage blessing of Ceres to Prospero’s pair of happy lovers. But Shelley dares to welcome autumnal sadness and wintry bareness, finding in the wild wind which sweeps the forest leaves away an exultant harbinger of the awakening year. Harmonizing under a common idea the forces of external nature and the passion of the writer’s individual heart, the stanzas, with all the penetrating power of a lyric, have something almost of epic largeness and grandeur.

In the ode Shelley makes confession of his hours of weakness and pain. “I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!” With one who acknowledged that love and fame (fame, which is but love disguised) are the poet’s food, the indifference or hostility with which his writings had been received would assuredly have depressed his poetic powers, were not his native strength and instinctive promptings as a poet of a rare and enduring quality, and did he not receive from a little circle of friends the love and esteem which the world refused. “Nothing is more difficult and unwelcome,” he said a year before his death, “than to write without a confidence of finding readers.” And again, not many days before the end, “It is impossible to compose except under the strong excitement of an assurance of finding sympathy in what you write.” Yet almost all that Shelley wrought was produced, as it

\* I borrow some words from Shelley’s note on the poem.



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were, in solitude, for an unheeding or an adverse world. While at Leghorn, he had heard of an article in the *Quarterly Review* for April which noticed in no fair or courteous spirit "The Revolt of Islam," and made that poem the occasion of a personal attack on its author's character and conduct. "In the enthusiasm of youth, indeed," wrote the reviewer, "a man like Mr. Shelley may cheat himself with the imagined loftiness and independence of his theory, and it is easy to invent a thousand sophisms to reconcile his conscience to the impurity of his practice: but this lasts only long enough to lead him on beyond the power of return; he ceases to be the dupe, but with desperate malignity he becomes the deceiver of others. Like the Egyptian of old, the wheels of his chariot are broken, the path of 'mighty waters' closes in upon him behind, and a still deepening ocean is before him:—for a short time are seen his impotent struggles against a resistless power, his blasphemous execrations are heard, his despair but poorly assumes the tone of triumph and defiance, and he calls ineffectually on others to follow him to the same ruin—finally he sinks 'like lead' to the bottom and is forgotten. So it is now in part, so shortly will it be entirely with Mr. Shelley." And the writer went on to say that if he might withdraw the veil of private life, and show the true character of the author of "The Revolt of Islam," it would be indeed a disgusting picture which should be disclosed. At Leghorn, Shelley had no opportunity of seeing the *Quarterly*. In Florence, at Delesert's reading-room, it was taken among other journals and magazines; and there, on one of the early days of October, a friend of Medwin's, Lord Dillon, observed a young man bent very earnestly over the *Review*; it was Shelley. When he came to the final page, which contains the parallel between himself and the Egyptian king, he "burst into a convulsive laughter, closed the book with an hysteric laugh, and hastily left the room, his Ha! ha's ringing down the stairs." \*

\* Medwin, "Life of Shelley," vol. i. pp. 353, 359.

Leigh Hunt sprang forward to the defence of his friend, and in three successive numbers of the *Examiner* for September and October replied to the criticisms and calumnies of the anonymous reviewer. He had resided for nearly three months in the same house with Mr. Shelley, and how was this “shamefully dissolute” poet living all that time? “As much like Plato himself as any of his theories resemble Plato—or rather still more like a Pythagorean. . . . We never met, in short, with a being who came nearer, perhaps so near, to that height of humanity mentioned in the conclusion of an essay of Lord Bacon’s, where he speaks of excess of Charity, and of its not being in the power of ‘man or angel to come in danger by it.’” Shelley was touched by Hunt’s generous words. The *Quarterly* article he ascribed with a confident and ready injustice to Southey, who from time to time obtained the credit of more than one cruel piece of criticism in Gifford’s review, with which he had been wholly unconcerned. “Southey wrote the article in question, I am well aware,” Shelley informs his publisher, Ollier (October 15). “Observe the impudence of the man in speaking of himself. The only remark worth notice in this piece is the assertion that I imitate Wordsworth. It may as well be said that Lord Byron imitates Wordsworth, or that Wordsworth imitates Lord Byron, both being great poets, and deriving from the new springs of thought and feeling, which the great events of our age have exposed to view, a similar tone of sentiment, imagery, and expression. A certain similarity all the best writers of any particular age inevitably are marked with, from the spirit of that age acting on all. This I had explained in my preface, which the writer was too disingenuous to advert to. As to the other trash, and particularly that lame attack on my personal character, which was meant so ill, and which I am not the man to feel, ’tis all nothing. . . . I was amused, too, with the finale; it is like the end of the first act of an opera, when that tremendous concordant discord sets up from the

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orchestra, and everybody talks and sings at once. It describes the result of my battle with their Omnipotent God; his pulling me under the sea by the hair of my head like Pharaoh; my calling out like the devil who was *game* to the last; swearing and cursing in all comic and horrid oaths, like a French postilion on Mount Cenis; entreating everybody to drown themselves; pretending not to be drowned myself when I *am* drowned; and lastly, *being* drowned." The article which Shelley ascribed to Southey, and afterwards to Milman, is now known to have been written by his former schoolfellow at Eton, John Taylor Coleridge.\*

Such a review as that in the *Quarterly*, however unimportant as affecting the ultimate verdict on an extraordinary poem, is not without its influence in checking the flow of sympathy between an author and the public, in which he finds one important motive for self-utterance. Happily the year 1819 did not pass without some recognition of Shelley's genius, and that from a quarter from which it was wholly unexpected. "The Revolt of Islam" had been sent by Wilson to De Quincey, with a request that he would write a review of it for *Blackwood's Magazine*. De Quincey read the poem, and was surprised to find in it more ability than he had conceived Shelley to possess. He was not inclined to make it the subject of a review; but he returned the book to Wilson, with a letter expressing his favourable judgment of Shelley's work.† In January, 1819, appeared a notice of "The Revolt

\* Shelley returns to the article in a letter to Ollier of December 15: "There is one very droll thing in the *Quarterly*. They say that 'my chariot-wheels are broken.' Heaven forbid! My chariot, you may tell them, was built by one of the best makers in Bond Street, and it has gone several thousand miles in perfect security. What a comical thing it would be to make the following advertisement! 'A report having prevailed, in consequence of some insinuations in the *Quarterly Review*, that Mr. Shelley's chariot-wheels are broken, Mr. Charters, of Bond Street, begs to assure the public that they, after having carried him through Italy, France, and Switzerland, still continue in excellent repair.'"

† "Notes of De Quincey's Conversations with Richard Woodhouse," given in Mr. R. Garnett's edition of the "Confessions of an English Opium-Eater" (Parchement Library), p. 217.

of Islam" from Wilson's pen, which has been justly described as by far the worthiest recognition that Shelley's genius received in his lifetime. The article was followed in June and November by a second and a third, drawing attention to "Rosalind and Helen," and "Alastor." "It is impossible to read a page of his 'Revolt of Islam,' " said the critic of *Blackwood*, "without perceiving that in nerve and pith of conception he approaches more nearly to Scott and Byron than any other of their contemporaries." And again, "We do not hesitate to say, with all due respect for the character of that journal, that Mr. Shelley has been infamously and stupidly treated in the *Quarterly Review*. His reviewer there, whoever he is, does not show himself a man of such lofty principles as to entitle him to ride the high horse in company with the author of 'The Revolt of Islam.' And when one compares the *vis inertiae* of his motionless prose with the 'eagle-winged raptures' of Mr. Shelley's poetry, one does not think, indeed, of Satan reproving Sin, but one does think—we will say it in plain words and without a figure—of a dunce rating a man of genius. If that critic does not know that Mr. Shelley is a poet, almost in the very highest sense of that mysterious word, then we appeal to all those whom we have enabled to judge for themselves, if he be not unfit to speak of poetry before the people of England." \* Walter Scott had reviewed "Frankenstein" in *Blackwood* a year since, and Shelley had written from the Baths of Lucca to Scott, probably in acknowledgment of the article. Who else save Scott, he now thought, could be the author of the "antidote" in *Blackwood* to the "bane" of the *Quarterly Review*? Unless it were "Miching Mallecho," said Mary to Mrs. Gisborne, it must be Walter Scott.

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During the autumn and winter months, Shelley was not unmindful of Henry Reveley's daring attempt to construct a steamer which should ply between Leghorn, Genoa, and

\* *Blackwood's Magazine*, November, 1819 (review of "Alastor"), p. 153.

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Marseilles. To play the part of a demiurge was a delight to Shelley; even to have an interest in the demiurgic effort was no mean happiness. So it had been with him while the great embankment was in process of construction at Tremadoc; so was it now. To send speeding across the Mediterranean a magic bark—

“That asks no aid of sail or oar,  
That fears no spite of wind or tide”—

would have been a noble culmination to those labours of the craftsman which in former days had launched on the waters of the Serpentine or the pond near Primrose Hill his tiny paper flotilla. The interests of his friends at Leghorn were now, as it were, in his hands. All his talent for contrivance and such skill as he possessed in practical affairs (and it was not inconsiderable) were placed at the service of Reveley and the steamboat. “Shelley reads Calderon, and talks about the steam-engine,” is an entry in Mary’s journal for September 22; and a few days later she writes from Florence to Mrs. Gisborne, “We talk a great deal about you, and long to know some news of the steam-engine.” Henry Reveley was not unskilled in the conduct of such operations, for already he had exhibited two steam-engines—one a model constructed for the University of Pisa which drove a forge-hammer; the other, which worked two pairs of stones, designed for a corn-mill. He afterwards stated that at Shelley’s desire the engine for the steamboat was undertaken on much too large a scale; the cost was ruinously enhanced, and he was compelled to spend months at the great forges in the mountains in order to obtain the required masses of wrought-iron. In October, Henry was working, as his mother reported, not only with vigour but with fury; the lower part of the house at Leghorn was filled with models for casting and forging; yet still the general progress of the work was retarded for want of cash. It was not in Shelley’s power to supply on the instant the

necessary funds ; but no pains should be spared to overcome the difficulty. " About Henry and the steam-engine I am in torture until this money comes from London, though I am sure that it will and must come ; unless, indeed, my banker has broke, and then it will be my loss, not Henry's—a little delay will mend the matter. I would then write instantly to London an effectual letter, and by return of post all would be set right—it would then be a thing easily set straight ; but if it were not, you know me too well not to know that there is no personal suffering or degradation or toil, or anything that can be named, with which I do not feel myself bound to support this enterprise of Henry. But all this rhodomontade only shows how correct Mr. Beilby's advice was about the discipline necessary for my imagination. No doubt that all will go on with mercantile and commonplace exactness, and that you will be spared the suffering, and I the virtue, incident to some untoward event." \*

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An untoward event, however, did in fact occur. Having on October 21 sent 111 sequins, the produce of £50, to Henry Reveley, in confident expectation that £200 was on the way to him from England, Shelley received a week later the strange and disturbing news that his bill for £200 had been returned from the bankers protested. His first thought was for Henry, and how to avert the threatened delay in achieving their cherished purpose. When presently his friend announced that the cylinder—the first in Italy of such a size—was cast, great was Shelley's exultation. " Your volcanic description of the birth of the cylinder," he writes, " is very characteristic of you and of it. One might imagine God when he made the earth, and saw the granite mountains and flinty promontories flow into their craggy forms, and the splendour of their fusion filling millions of miles of the void space, like the tail of a comet, so looking, so delighting in his work. . . . Your boat will be to the ocean of water what this earth is to the ocean of

\* To Mrs. Gisborne : Florence, October 13 or 14, 1819.

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 VII. aboard her,” he says, “and be an unworthy partaker in the  
 June, 1819—glory of the astonishment of the Livornese, when she returns  
 Jan. 1820. from her cruise round Melloria. When do you think she will  
 be fit for sea?” Before the close of the year at least half of  
 the missing £200 had been recovered, and had been trans-  
 mitted to the *macchinista* at Leghorn. But still the com-  
 pletion of the work was three months distant. Shelley tried  
 to console himself by remembering that at that time the  
 vernal equinox would be over, and the early wakening of the  
 year would have paved the Mediterranean with calm for their  
 first cruise. When, however, March, 1820, had more than half  
 gone past, the end was still unattained. “This steamer,”  
 wrote Shelley, who, with Mary, had been applying himself to  
 mathematics, “is a sort of asymptote, which seems ever to  
 approach and never to arrive.” And two months later, when  
 Reveley had departed with the Gisbornes to England, “Will  
 Henry write me an adamantine letter, flowing not like the  
 words of Sophocles with honey, but molten brass and iron,  
 and bristling with wheels and teeth? I saw his steamboat  
 asleep under the walls. I was afraid to waken it, and ask  
 whether it was dreaming of him, for the same reason that I  
 would have refrained from awakening Ariadne, after Theseus  
 had left her—unless I had been Bacchus.” But no joyous  
 awakening was in store for the Ariadne of the Italian  
 Wapping when her Theseus returned from his wanderings.

Shelley’s friendly offices were not confined to the supply  
 of funds in aid of Henry Reveley’s enterprise. The young  
 man’s education had been chiefly scientific, and although  
 sufficiently skilled in the Italian language, he expressed him-  
 self imperfectly and with difficulty when he attempted to  
 write an English letter.\* Shelley believed that a mastery of

\* Mr. Reveley afterwards wrote, “Whenever a letter had to be sent from me, which seldom happened, more than once it was written out by Mr. Gisborne, and was copied out by me as best I could.”

the English tongue was essential to Henry's success in life, and he undertook in an informal way to be tutor by correspondence of this backward scholar. "You know our bargain," Shelley wrote on October 28; "you are to write me *uncorrected* letters; just as the words come, so let me have them—I like coin from the mint, though it may be a little rough at the edges; clipping is penal according to our statute.

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"In the first place, listen to a reproach; you ought to have sent me an acknowledgment of my last billet. I am very happy to hear from Mr. Gisborne, and he knows well enough how to interest me himself, not to need to rob me of an occasion of hearing from you. Let you and I try if we cannot be as punctual and business-like as the best of them. But no clipping and coining, if you please.

"Now take this, that I say in a light just so serious as not to give you pain. In fact, my dear fellow, my motive in soliciting your correspondence, and that flowing from your own mind, and clothed in your own words, is, that you may begin to accustom to discipline yourself in the only practice of life in which you appear deficient. You know that you are writing to a person persuaded of all the confidence and respect due to your powers in those branches of science to which you have addicted yourself; and you will not permit a false shame with regard to the mere mechanical arrangement of words to overbalance the advantage arising from the free communication of ideas. Thus you will become day by day more skilful in the management of that instrument of their communication, on which the attainment of a person's just rank in society depends. Do not think me arrogant. There are subjects of the highest importance in which you are far better qualified to instruct me than I am qualified to instruct you on this subject." Thus graciously and gently was Henry wooed to accept a lesson in English composition from the author of "Prometheus" and the "Cenci."

Shelley's anxieties about money arising from calls made



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upon him for the construction of the steamship were heightened by news from England, which showed that money might also be urgently needed to rescue his wife's father from distress. During many years Godwin had occupied his house in Skinner Street rent free. A demand was now raised for the accumulated rent of several years, and the suit was brought into the law courts. "Mary is well," Shelley wrote in November; "but for the affair in London I think her spirits would be good. What shall I—what can I—what ought I to do? You cannot picture to yourself my perplexity." His faculties, he declared, were imprisoned within a mind whose bars were daily cares and vulgar difficulties. To deliver Godwin from his never-ending embarrassments seemed a hopeless, and perhaps a thankless, task. At times he thought of returning to England; but to travel so far north during winter was forbidden by the physicians. In the following letter to Miss Curran, Shelley confesses how seriously this new trouble weighed upon his spirits.

*Shelley to Miss Curran.\**

Florence, November 18, 1819.

Your letter, my dear Miss Curran, arrived on the eve of Mary's confinement, and from the fear of agitating her on a subject which has never until now ceased to be a source of perpetual grief to her, I refrained from showing it to her, and consequently from answering it until the expected crisis had past. She has now, a few days ago, brought me a fine little boy, after a labour of the very, very mildest character. She is exceedingly well at this moment.

We hear with great concern that you have had the malaria fever. Did you venture too soon to Rome? It is more like a sepulchre than a city; beautiful, but the abode of death. I hope we shall find you recovered as well from this attack as improved in your habitual health. I have suffered very much from a disease of the climate this summer, and the winter, which awakens

\* The original of this letter is in possession of Mr. C. W. Frederickson, of New York, who has kindly given me a transcript. Miss Curran had written on the subject of the monument on William's grave.

my old pain in the side, is, contrary to custom, a relief to my sensations.

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I do not think we shall bend our course towards the south until the spring, if indeed we can then do so. Godwin has lost his lawsuit about the rent of his house, and we are suddenly called upon for a large sum of money. This may necessitate my return to England for a few months; my family will of course remain in Italy. Do we not seem like a knot of persons destined to ill?

With respect to the subject in which you are so kind as to interest yourself for us—the larger pyramid has our approbation, and perhaps, if we decided upon it, they would case it entirely with white marble for the sum destined to this purpose. Their profit is probably absurdly great upon things of this kind, as they calculate that the regret of the survivors will induce them to comply with whatever demand. Would it be necessary to decide upon the inscription before it is begun?

A thousand thanks to you about the Cenci.\* But, although my pleasure in possessing it will be very great, do not let me be the cause of fatigue or tiring to you. At the earliest we cannot be at Rome before March.

Believe me, my dear Miss Curran, with earnest wishes that we may find you in better health and happiness than we left you.

Yours most sincerely,

P. B. SHELLEY.

Mary desires her best love, etc. We have heard from Venice, and all is going on well.

At the boarding-house of Madame Merveilleux du Plantis, in the Via Val Fonda, Shelley, Mary, and Claire were not quite without agreeable society. The short winter days went swiftly past. A late breakfast, to suit the convenience of little Percy, whose morning sleep must not be broken, and the necessary attendance on him until noon, left hardly enough leisure for Mary's daily walk, now necessary to her health; on her return it was time for dinner; and then it was evening. Claire had her singing-master, and got on prosperously with her *sol fa's*; when not engaged in her musical studies, she was busy as a

\* Miss Curran had promised to make a copy of the portrait of Beatrice.

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bee among other pupils, serving as an interpreter when they were unskilled in the language of their teachers. "We mix a little with the people downstairs," Mary wrote, "because some of them are tolerably agreeable people, and others assert a claim on our acquaintance on the score of being acquainted with Shelley's family." Miss Sophia Stacey, for whom Shelley made a copy of his graceful verses "On a Dead Violet," was a ward of his uncle, Mr. Parker—an uncle by marriage—who resided at Bath. She had heard of the poet, and, in spite of ill words spoken concerning him, was eager to make his acquaintance. Miss Stacey was lively and unaffected, had a sweet voice, and sang well, said Mary Shelley, for an English *dilettante*. "There are some ladies come to this house who knew Shelley's family," Mary told Mrs. Gisborne; "the younger one was *enthousiasmée* to see him; the elder said that he was a very shocking man, but finding that we became the mode, she melted and paid us a visit. She is a little old Welshwoman, without the slightest education. She has got an Italian master, and has entered into the difficult part of the language, the singulars and plurals—the *il's* and the *lo's*—and is to turn masculines into feminines, and feminines into masculines; but she says she does not think she shall ever learn, for she cannot help mixing Welsh with her Italian—and besides, it spoils her French. She speaks the sweetest French, as you may judge by her telling her master '*Je ne peut lire aucune plus.*'" \*

His health suffering from the severe climate, Shelley had decided to leave Florence in February, 1820. The thought of visiting England alone, or of migrating to Rome, was abandoned, and Pisa was chosen as a suitable place of residence for the spring. The milder climate and the singularly pure water from the reservoirs of Pisa, it was believed, would be of service to Shelley's health; and when he needed medical advice, he had the opportunity at Pisa of consulting one of the most

\* December 1, 1819. I think the name of the elder lady was Mrs. Meadows.

eminent physicians in Europe, Vaccà Berlinghieri, who had studied in England under Bell and Hunter, and acquired fame by the invention of various useful instruments, and by a series of remarkable publications on surgery.\* The weather in November and December had been unusually harsh at Florence, on which Shelley "Calderonized," calling it "an epic of rain, with an episode of frost, and a few similes concerning fine weather." In January, the episode of frost was cruelly lengthened out, causing with Shelley extreme nervous irritability. Writing to his cousin Medwin at Geneva, on January 17, he imagines the lake a plain of solid ice, bounded by the snowy hills, "whose white mantles contrast with the aërial rose-colour of the eternal glaciers." "If your health allows you to skate," he adds, "this plain is the floor of your Paradise, and the white world seems spinning backwards as you fly." So through his fancy he tries to win enjoyment from his cousin's possible glee amid the frost and snow; but for his own part he acknowledges his extreme discomfort. "Nothing reconciles me to the slightest indication of winter, much less such infernal cold as my nerves have been racked upon for the last ten days." During these days, when indoor warmth was more agreeable than the froze air without, Shelley read much from the Bible, and with Mary set himself to translate from that great religious thinker, who had already at Marlow drawn him into discipleship—Spinoza. An extract from Mary Shelley's journal will tell how the days went by.

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Jan. 1820.*Mary Shelley's Journal (1820).*

"*Saturday, January 1.*—Read Livy; work. Shelley reads the Bible, Sophocles, and the Gospel of St. Matthew to me.

"*Sunday, January 2.*—Read Livy. Walk in the Cascine. Pass a part of the evening downstairs with Mrs. Meadows. Talk of our plans with Shelley.

\* Lady Mountcashell wrote of Vaccà to Shelley: "I never heard one so willing to reason with a patient, or so little inclined to giving drugs."

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"*Monday, January 3.*—Read Livy. Walk to see the pictures of Salvator Rosa. Shelley reads 'Don Juan' aloud in the evening; he goes to the theatre with Mr. Tomkins.\* Mrs. Meadows visits me.

"*Wednesday, January 5.*—Read Livy; work; read Mazeppa. Shelley reads Sophocles, and St. Matthew aloud to me. Translate S[pinoz]a.

"*Friday, January 7.*—Read Livy; work. Shelley is ill.

"*Wednesday, January 12.*—Write to Miss Stacey and to Charles. Translate S[pinoz]a. Work in the evening. Shelley reads 'The Tempest' aloud, and the Bible and Sophocles to himself. Shelley writes to Hunt.

"*Saturday, January 15.*—Finish translating the first chapter of S[pinoz]a; read Livy. Shelley reads the Bible and Sophocles; the 'Hercules' of Sophocles [the *Trachiniae*] aloud to me. Mr. and Mrs. Meadows spend the evening with us.

"*Sunday, January 16.*—Translate S[pinoz]a with Shelley."

On that day—Sunday, January 16—the cold suddenly disappeared; a great thaw took place. Lovely days, almost spring-like, followed; and it was decided on a sudden to depart by the Arno for Pisa. "We embark," Shelley wrote to Mr. Gisborne, "and I promise myself the delight of the sky, the water, and the mountains. I must suffer at any rate, but I expect to suffer less in a boat than in a carriage." The treacherous skies, however, did not keep their pledge; the

\* Mr. Tomkins was staying at the same boarding-house with Shelley. He had much talent as an amateur portrait-painter, sang well, and spoke several languages. Born two years after Shelley, Mr. Tomkins was living at Newcastle, Australia, in 1884, when I had the pleasure of receiving a letter from his daughter. On January 7 and January 9, Shelley sat to Mr. Tomkins for his portrait in crayons. "He wore his collar always open," writes Miss Tomkins, "and had a fur-collared cloak on when sketched." "Once at the theatre, Shelley complaining of the coldness of the English residents, my father suggested that he should take the sacrament at the Embassy, by way of showing that his religious opinions were changing, and consequently that he was becoming more worthy of their regard. I need not say that this advice was at once rejected." Mr. Tomkins's portrait of Shelley has unhappily been lost.

morning of January 26 proved bleak and windy; and at Empoli the voyagers were glad to exchange their boat for a carriage in which they jolted the rest of the way to Pisa.

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"Set off at eight," Claire records in her journal. "Mr. and Mrs. Meadows and Zoide walk with us to the side of the Arno, where we begin our navigation. The weather was at first very severe, a keen wind blowing all the time. The banks of the Arno are very beautiful, somewhat like those of the Rhine, but of a much softer character. We see hills the whole length of our course, now hanging over the river, and now receding in long green valleys to meet others. We arrived at Empoli about two, having done thirty miles in five hours. There we landed and took a carriage for Pisa, which city we reached about six at night. We lodge at the Tre Donzelle."

## CHAPTER VIII.

PISA : LEGHORN : THE BATHS OF ST. GIULIANO  
(JANUARY TO OCTOBER, 1820).

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THE greater part of Shelley's life, from January, 1820, to its close, was spent at Pisa. He came to Pisa seeking health, and health in a measure he found. But he seems never to have felt in due degree the city's inestimable worth as a treasury of Italian art. For architecture, except in examples of Greek or Roman antiquity, his feeling was untrained and crude. Milan Cathedral astonished and delighted him; but we hear no word from Shelley concerning Giotto's bell-tower, or the pulpit of Niccolò Pisano. The frescoes of the Campo Santo probably impressed him as barbarities of Christian art produced before the discovery of the antique world had rendered possible the tender ideality of Guido or the sublime imaginings of Salvator Rosa.\*

Pisa in 1820 was a tranquil, a beautiful, and stately city. "It looks," wrote Leigh Hunt, "like the residence of an university: many parts of it seem made up of colleges; and we feel as if we ought to 'walk gowned.'" But the days of its greatness were in the past; the number of its inhabitants, said to have been formerly one hundred and twenty thousand,

\* At Oxford, where Shelley might have learnt much, he was "always unwilling to visit the remarkable specimens of architecture, the objects of art, and the various antiquities" (Hogg, "Life of Shelley," vol. i. p. 109).

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had dwindled to about eighteen thousand; in the remoter streets, where the hands of the red-liveried convicts were not at work, the grass had leave to sprout and spread. "A look out upon the Lung' Arno at noonday is curious," wrote Hunt. "A blue sky is overhead, dazzling stone underneath, the yellow Arno gliding along, generally with nothing upon it, sometimes a lazy sail; the houses on the opposite side sleeping with their green blinds down; and nobody passing but a few labourers, carmen, or country women in their veils and handkerchiefs, hastening with bare feet, but never too fast to forget a certain air of strut and stateliness." Yet, in its comparative desolation, Pisa retained its grace, and amid all its sobriety there was a certain cheerfulness. The clear atmosphere, the evening sea-breeze, the bright houses beside the bright river, the forest to the west, the gleaming waters at no great distance, in summer-time the waving breadths of corn bordered by hedgerow trees, the vine-festoons, the peasant busy in his field, the hills hoary with olive, the solemn Apennines, the clear Carrara peaks, gave its peculiar charm to the Tuscan city. The Pisan sunsets especially delighted Shelley. "Stand on the marble arch," he said, "cast your eye, if you are not dazzled, on its river glowing as with fire, then follow the graceful curve of the palaces on the Lung' Arno till the arch is naved by the massy dungeon tower . . . frowning in dark relief, and tell me if anything can surpass a sunset at Pisa."\* On the whole, the choice of Pisa, with its mild climate and pure water, and quietude and beauty, as a place of residence for Shelley was not unwise, and was justified by the event.

Nor were Shelley and Mary quite without acquaintances at Pisa. At Casa Silva, in the Via Mala Gonella, lived Mr. and Mrs. Mason, with their daughters Nerina and the pretty Lauretta. Mrs. Mason, as Lady Mountcashell now called herself, had been the favourite pupil of Mary Wollstonecraft more than

\* Medwin, "Conversations of Lord Byron," vol. i. p. 19 (edit. 1832).



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thirty years since, when Mary had occupied the situation of governess in the family of Lord Kingston. In 1791, her "dear Margaret" had been married to Stephen, the second Earl Mountcashell. When Godwin visited Ireland in 1800, the countess was warmly hospitable towards the illustrious husband of her former teacher, and delighted to act as his guide through the beautiful scenery of the county Wicklow. In political principles there was much in common between the author of "Political Justice" and his kind entertainer; but the year 1800—that of the Union—gave a fatal blow to Lady Mountcashell's patriotic enthusiasm. "Since my country sank never to rise again," she wrote to Mrs. Shelley in 1819, "I have been a cool politician; but I cannot forget how I once felt, and can still sympathize with those capable of similar feelings." "Lady Mountcashell," Godwin wrote from Ireland, "is a singular character: a democrat and a republican in all their sternness, yet with no ordinary portion either of understanding or good nature. If any of our comic writers were to fall in her company, the infallible consequence would be her being gibbeted in a play. She is uncommonly tall and brawny, with bad teeth, white eyes, and a handsome countenance. She commonly dresses as I have seen Mrs. Fenwick dressed out of poverty, with a grey gown and no linen visible; but with gigantic arms, which she commonly folds, naked and exposed almost up to the shoulders." When Hardy was acquitted of treason in 1794, Lady Mountcashell called at his shop to catch sight of so illustrious a lover of freedom, and obtain a pair of shoes fashioned by his republican hands; she called for the shoes herself, but found them shockingly made, pinching and galling her without remorse. "Mr. Hardy," she said, "I am very sorry, but my feet are democratical, and your shoes are aristocratical, and they don't agree at all. Pray have the kindness to put them on the last for me." Hardy thereupon set to work on a second pair, and insisted that these should be a free gift from a democrat cobbler to a

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democrat countess.\* Miss Clairmont's description of Lady Mountcashell in Italy, now an elderly lady, is far more pleasing than that of Godwin of an earlier date. "She was very tall," writes Claire, "of a lofty and calm presence. Her features were regular and delicate; her large blue eyes singularly well set; her complexion of a clear pale, but yet full of life, and giving an idea of health. Her countenance beamed mildly, with the expression of a refined, cultivated, and highly cheerful mind. In all my intercourse with her I never saw the smallest symptom of the melancholy and discontent which was so striking both in Byron and Shelley. She was ever all hopefulness and serenity and benevolence; her countenance was perfectly irradiated by these sentiments, and at the same time [by sentiments] of purity and unconscious sweetness and beauty." The Earl Mountcashell was still living; her severance from him had taken place long since; and for many years she had resided in Italy as the wife of Mr. George William Tighe, son of Edward Tighe, M.P., of Rossana, County Wicklow, and cousin to the celebrated authoress of "Psyche." Setting aside the one fact—and that, indeed, a cardinal fact—that their union was a violation of law and duty, the manner of "Mr. and Mrs. Mason's" life appears to have been faultless in its regularity and propriety; and in spite of their breach of the bond of wedlock, both were looked up to as persons deserving a respect almost amounting to veneration.† Mr. Tighe lived much in his library, and, being a lover of solitude, seldom appeared in Mrs. Mason's drawing-room. Those who met him were impressed by his high-bred courtesy and fine old-fashioned notions of the honour that becomes a gentleman. He was, says Claire, "a most accurate and penetrating judge

\* This story was told by Lady Mountcashell in Claire's hearing, and is recorded in her diary, February 13, 1820.

† Medwin speaks of Lady Mountcashell's "retirement from the world" as "not unprofitable, for it was devoted to one of the best works on the education of children which we possess." Miss Clairmont names the book "Advice to Young Mothers by a Grandmother."

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of human nature; he had lived with the hermit and the sage in their refined solitude; he had lived in the world, and had learned that the man bred in the world and living for it has seldom any heart or conscience.”\* During the early days at Pisa, both before and after lodgings had been found at Casa Frasi on the Lung’ Arno, much time was spent by Shelley, Mary, and Claire at the hospitable house of Mr. and Mrs. Mason.†

These early days at Pisa glided by quietly, almost without events. Shelley continued his readings from the Bible—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel—readings that did not go ill with his study of Plato, Æschylus, Virgil, Shakespeare, or the translation of Spinoza, which Mary wrote from his dictation.‡ At the same time, husband and wife—the pair of wedded students—set themselves to advance in mathematics, but they do not appear ever to have proceeded far. Claire, for her part, was engaged with her lessons in singing and dancing, and she found no little pleasure in the society of Mrs. Mason. But, excepting their friends at Casa Silva, few acquaintances were seen. “I ought to tell you,” Shelley wrote to Medwin (April 16), “that we do not enter into society. The few people we see are those who suit us, and I believe nobody but us. I find saloons and compliments too great bores; though I am of an extremely social disposition.” He would gladly have received his cousin as a visitor, but felt bound to warn Medwin

\* Mrs. Mason was more Claire’s friend than Mary’s. I cannot say for certain whether the following refers to her in a letter from Mrs. Shelley to Mrs. Gisborne, dated Florence, December 28, 1819. “Madame M. might go on exceedingly well, and gain, if she had the brains of a goose; but her head is a sieve, and her temper worse than wildfire—it is gunpowder, and blows up everything.” I think it may be Mrs. Meadows who is here described.

† In the copy of his “Life of Shelley,” prepared for a second edition, Medwin writes, “She [Lady Mountcashell] was a superior and accomplished woman, and a great resource to Shelley, who read with her Greek. He told me that she was the source of the inspiration of his ‘Sensitive Plant,’ and that the scene of it was laid in her garden, as unpoetical a place as could be well imagined.”

‡ “Spinoza” occupied Shelley and Mary, off and on, until they went to Leghorn in June.

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that the *ménage* at his Pisan lodgings was "too philosophic to abound in much external luxury," and that he himself was a wretched invalid. Medwin, who had a certain *dilettante* taste for art, would find much to interest him in the Italian galleries and churches. "Italy," wrote Shelley, "is the place for you, the very place—the Paradise of exiles, the retreat of Pariahs. But I am thinking of myself rather than of you." With Professor Vaccà, who at least relieved Shelley from the torment of useless drugs, he had some pleasant social intercourse. Vaccà, like Shelley, was a Liberal in politics and in his philosophical opinions. When in April the Gisbornes visited their friends at Pisa, and Vaccà called, he was glad to renew his acquaintance of days long since, when Henry Reveley was a student at the University. "Vaccà calls," Claire enters in her journal. "A very profound and atheistical conversation between him and S——, La Signora Mary, and Il Signor Giovanni [Mr. Gisborne], not unmixed with joy at an interview, after ten years' absence, with his old and liberal friends." The Gisbornes, with Henry Reveley, were soon about to start for England, partly to transact some business affairs which required their presence. Mary, indeed, hoped that Mrs. Gisborne might remain in Italy, and might occupy during her husband's absence a room in the pleasant new apartment to which the household at Pisa had moved in mid-March. This friendly plan could not be carried out; the Gisbornes were compelled to depart; and with their departure and that of their son the enterprise of the steamboat, in which Shelley had invested so many airy hopes and not a little solid coin, must come to a standstill. His purse at this time was far from overflowing. "I am printing some things," he wrote to Medwin, "which I am vain enough to wish you to see.\* Not that they will sell; they are the reverse, in this respect, of the razors of Peter Pindar. A man like me can, in fact, only be a poet by dint of stinting himself of meat and drink to pay

\* He refers to "Prometheus Unbound, with other Poems."

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his printer's bills; that is, he can only print poems on this condition." Yet he had no word of reproach for Henry Reveley; and on the Gisbornes undertaking to do some services for him in Leghorn before their departure, he writes gratefully as if the debt were all on his side. "A thousand thanks for your kindness and interest in me. Rivers flow to the sea, which is rich in fatness; whoever heard before of their hastening to the barren wilderness?"\* To his friends in England, the Gisbornes would be the bearer of some tokens of remembrance from the exile in Italy—alabaster vases from the antique for Horace Smith, a copy of the "Decameron" in some excellent edition, if procurable at Pisa or Leghorn, for Hunt. Possibly, when the Gisbornes returned, Hogg might join them and renew in Pisa the old companionship of the Oxford days; better still, if Hogg and Peacock could come together, and Hunt make up a trio. Then, indeed, the delights of a new decameron might gladden Italy and Shelley, and the plagues and ignoble cares of the world might be forgotten in the companionship of chosen friends.†

"I am on the whole greatly benefited by my residence in Italy," Shelley wrote to Peacock in May, "and but for certain moral causes should probably have been enabled to re-establish my system completely." These moral causes which hindered Shelley's recovery were various. It was no slight source of uneasiness and regret that Godwin, whom he had tried so

\* Pisa, March 8, 1820 (letter unpublished).

† Claire's journal, May 5, 1820, gives an amusing picture of the "odd English" in Pisa: "Breakfast in Casa Silva. A lesson from Legerino. Account of the *odd* English at present in Pisa. Walter Savage Landor, who will not see a single English person; says he is glad the country produces people of worth, but he will have nothing to do with them. Shelley, who walks about reading a great quarto 'Encyclopædia,' with another volume under his arm. *Tatty* [a familiar name at Casa Silva for Mr. Tighe], who sets potatoes in pots; and a Mr. Dolby, who is rejoicing that he is escaped from England at last, although he is seventy, some say eighty, years of age; he is short and thick, and goes about with his pockets stuffed out with books, singing, and a pair of spectacles hung by a gold chain round his neck. He is learned, and tells every one that he would put on a better coat to visit them, if he had another in the world besides the one he wears."

zealously to serve, and towards whom Mary felt such affectionate reverence, should have come to regard him with distrust and even hostility, and that he himself should be compelled to speak of Godwin as his "bitterest enemy."

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"You will see," he wrote in his letter to Maria Gisborne—

"That which was Godwin,—greater none than he  
Though fallen, and fallen on evil times, to stand  
Among the spirits of our age and land,  
Before the dread tribunal of To-come  
The foremost, while Rebuke cowers pale and dumb."

"Added years," said Shelley, "only add to my admiration of his intellectual powers, and even the moral resources of his character." But Godwin had suffered the inevitable disintegration of spirit which results from the worship of exalted ideals on the one hand, and on the other the neglect of one commonplace virtue. He was a votary of reason, justice, and benevolence; but at the expense of every friend and every amiable stranger from whom he could beg or borrow the means of his support. Perpetually harassed by debts, he caught at the nearest means of deliverance, however inconsistent with personal dignity or independence, and found compensation for any loss of self-respect in contemplating himself as the exalted, intellectual benefactor of his race. The affair of the house which he had long occupied rent-free pressed heavily upon him. It was proposed that he should quit Skinner Street; but this proposal Mrs. Godwin, who looked upon the bookshop as her husband's chief means of support, stoutly resisted. When, in October, 1819, the action for rent went against Godwin, Shelley, as usual, came forward to his assistance, promised a sum of money which Godwin understood to be £500, and pledged himself in writing to pay certain quarterly instalments of fifty pounds each; the payment was delayed, and Godwin's anxieties grew intolerable. By some accident of the post, a letter of complaint and remonstrance, addressed to Mary, did not reach her until some seven weeks had passed.

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"Do not let me be led into a fool's paradise," Godwin wrote. "It is better to look my ruin full in the face at once than to be amused for ever with promises, at the same time that nothing is done. . . . If Shelley will not immediately send me such bills as I propose or as you offer, my next request is, that he will let me alone, or not disturb the sadness of my shipwreck by holding out false lights, and deluding me with appearances of relief when no relief is at hand." Such words caused Mary the deepest anguish and humiliation. By midsummer, £100, advanced by Horace Smith, had been paid to Godwin; but he was urgent to get speedily into his hands the entire sum which, as he asserted, had been promised. Shelley, he assured Mrs. Gisborne, who was now a visitor at Skinner Street, had treated him cruelly and unjustly, and would certainly be the death of him.\* If Mr. Gisborne could and would advance £400, and if that sum could certainly be applied so as to effect a compromise with Godwin's creditors, Shelley was prepared to make himself responsible for its payment. "I will not play a double part," he wrote to Mr. and Mrs. Gisborne (June 30), "and therefore I leave you to accept or reject the proposal contained in Mary's letter as shall suit your convenience or your feelings. I would impose one condition alone. If you perceive that the money will not fulfil its object, or that you cannot enforce the intended appropriation of it, I entreat you to refuse to lend it at all. You know my situation; you know Godwin's implacable exactions; you know his boundless and plausible sophistry. On the other hand, if you can effect this compromise, the benefit would be great. But in this, as in everything else, act with your usual high-minded sincerity. . . . If you have any communications unfit for Mary's agitated mind to make to me, address to me under cover to Mrs. Mason."

Mr. Gisborne was unable or unwilling to advance £400, and it remained for Shelley plainly to inform Godwin that he

\* Mrs. Gisborne's journal (unpublished) for 1820.

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could not be his perpetual preserver and deliverer. "I have given you," he wrote on August 7, "the amount of a considerable fortune, and have destituted myself, for the purpose of realizing it, of nearly four times the amount. Except for the *good will* which this transaction seems to have produced between you and me, this money, for any advantage that it ever conferred on you, might as well have been thrown into the sea. Had I kept in my own hands this £4000 or £5000, and administered it in trust for your permanent advantage, I should have been indeed your benefactor. The error, however, was greater in the man of mature age, extensive experience, and penetrating intellect than in the crude and impetuous boy. Such an error is seldom committed twice." Certainly, he writes, he had never promised £500; yet, if Mr. Gisborne could have advanced that sum, he was willing to become Mr. Gisborne's debtor, on condition that the money were applied to compromising the suit still pending. But is it credible that a claim of £1800 or £2000 would be compromised for a fourth of that sum? "Suppose after this I were to involve myself in the chance of destruction, to defraud my creditors of what is justly theirs, to withhold their due from those to whom I am the only source of happiness and misery, and send you these bills. The weakness and wickedness of my conduct would admit of some palliation if the money they produced were reserved for this attempt at compromise, and retransmitted to me the moment that attempt, as it must, should fail. In case any such reverse as bankruptcy happening to yourself, a circumstance which sometimes surprises the most prosperous concern, and is infinitely probable in an embarrassed business conducted by a person wholly ignorant of trade, how would you regret my folly in not having been severely just! Sir Philip Sidney, when dying and consumed with thirst, gave the helmet of water which was brought to him to the wounded soldier who stood beside him. It would not have been generosity, but folly, had he poured it on the ground, as you



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would that I should the wrecks of my once prosperous fortune. . . . If you are sincere on this subject, why, instead of seeking to plunge one already half ruined for your sake into deeper ruin, do you not procure the £400 by your own active power? A person of your extraordinary accomplishments might easily obtain from the booksellers for the promise of a novel a sum exceeding this amount. Your 'Answer to Malthus' would sell at least for £400. Half the care and thought bestowed upon honourable exertions of the highest faculties of our nature would have rewarded you more largely than dependence on a person whose precarious situation and ruined fortunes make that dependence a curse to both.

"Mary is now giving suck to her infant, in whose life, after the frightful events of the last two years, her own seems wholly to be bound up. Your letters, from their style and spirit (such is your erroneous notion of taste), never fail to produce an appalling effect on her frame. On one occasion, agitation of mind produced through her a disorder in the child similar to that which destroyed our little girl two years ago. The disorder was prolonged by the alarm which it occasioned, until by the utmost efforts of medical skill and care it was restored to health. On that occasion, Mary, at my request, authorized me to intercept such letters or information as I might judge likely to disturb her mind. That discretion I have exercised with the letter to which this is a reply. The correspondence, therefore, rests between you and me, if you should consider any further discussion of a similar nature to that in which you have lately been engaged with Mary necessary after the full explanation which I have given of my views, and the unalterable decision which I have pronounced. Nor can a correspondence with your daughter on a similar subject be renewed. It was ever wholly improper, and leads to specious imputations against both herself and you, which it is important for her honour as well as yours that I should not only repel but prevent. She has not, nor ought she to have,

the disposal of money ; if she had, poor thing, she would give it all to you. Such a father (I mean a man of such high genius) can be at no loss to find subjects on which to address such a daughter.”\*

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“This scurrilous letter,” as Godwin chose to describe it to Mrs. Gisborne, did not close the correspondence. “I should be sorry,” Shelley wrote in September, “to have said anything that wears the appearance of a threat; but imperious events compel me to foretell the consequences of your attempting to agitate her [Mary’s] mind. I need not tell you that the neglecting entirely to write to your daughter from the moment that nothing could be gained by it would admit of but one interpretation. You may address me as usual; . . . allow me to express the hope that you will write to me from time to time a frank account of the state of your affairs, and that you will consider my will to assist you as only limited by my power.”

It was while this painful correspondence with Godwin was disturbing the household peace of Shelley and Mary that the rascal Paolo, who had been dismissed at Naples for robbery of his master and shameful conduct towards Elise, made his attempt to extract money from Shelley by threatening to charge him with most grievous crimes. “They made a desperate push to do us a desperate mischief lately,” Mary wrote to Miss Curran, “but succeeded no further than to blacken us amongst the English; so, if you receive a fresh batch (or green bag) of scandal against us, I assure you it will be a lie. Poor souls! we live innocently, as you well know; if we did not, ten to one we should not be so unfortunate.”† Early in June Paolo’s machinations became known. Shelley instantly visited Leghorn, and put the matter into the hands of the attorney, Del Rosso. “That same Paolo,” wrote Mary to

\* Printed from the rough draft in Shelley’s handwriting.

† Pisa, San Giuliano, August 17. The “green bag” is, of course, an allusion to the charges against Queen Caroline laid by Lord Liverpool on the table of the House of Lords.

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Mrs. Gisborne on June 18, "is a most superlative rascal. I hope we have done with him; but I know not, since as yet we are obliged to guess as to his accomplices. . . . Tell my father I have not heard from him a long, long time, and am dreadfully anxious. The path of our life is a very thorny one, as you well know, nor is my anxiety concerning him the least of my troubles. . . . Shelley, of course, is not well; his troubles have given him a bilious attack." They played at consulting Virgil to obtain an oracle as to Mr. Gisborne's future. "For us," Mary goes on, "so darkling is our destiny, neither Virgil nor Homer would unfold the recesses of time, but spoke mysteriously of woes."

Paolo's infamous accusations were in some way connected with an infant child at Naples who had somehow come under Shelley's guardianship. To add to his distress, he learnt in June that the little girl had sickened, and in a few days came tidings of her death. "My poor Neapolitan," he wrote to Mr. and Mrs. Gisborne, "I hear, has a severe fever of dentition. I suppose she will die, and leave another memory to those which already torture me. I am waiting the next post with anxiety, but without much hope. What remains to me? Domestic peace and fame? You will laugh when you hear me talk of the latter; indeed it is only a shadow. The seeking of a sympathy with the unborn and the unknown is a feeble mood of allaying the love within us; and even that is beyond the grasp of so weak an aspirant as I. Domestic peace I might have—I may have—if I see you, I shall have—but have not, for Mary suffers dreadfully about the state of Godwin's circumstances. I am very nervous, but better in general health. We have had a most infernal business with Paolo, whom, however, we have succeeded in crushing. . . . *July 2.*—I have later news of my Neapolitan. I have taken every possible precaution for her, and hope that they will succeed. She is to come to us as soon as she recovers." And a little later, "My Neapolitan charge is dead. It seems as if

the destruction that is consuming me were an atmosphere which wrapt and *infected* everything connected with me. The rascal Paolo has been taking advantage of my situation at Naples in December, 1818, to attempt to extort money by threatening to charge me with the most horrible crimes. He is connected with some English here, who hate me with a fervour that almost does credit to their phlegmatic brains, and listen to and vent the most prodigious falsehoods. 'An ounce of civet, good apothecary, to sweeten this dunghill of a world.'

Perhaps it is to this time that we should refer the tale related by Medwin of a dastardly assault made upon Shelley at the post-office of Pisa by an English officer in the Portuguese service—an assault ascribed by Medwin to the prejudice and passion excited against Shelley by the article reviewing his "Revolt of Islam" in the *Quarterly Review*. He stood asking for his letters when a stranger in a military cloak, on hearing him pronounce his name, exclaimed, "What, are you that damned atheist Shelley?" and "without more preamble, being a tall, powerful man, struck him such a blow that it felled him to the ground and stunned him." Mr. Tighe, adds Medwin, tracked the aggressor to the Tre Donzelle, but he had fled to Genoa, whither Mr. Tighe and Shelley followed, but without being able to overtake him or learn his route from that city.\*

Partly in order to be near Del Rosso, the attorney employed against Paolo, Shelley, with Mary, Claire, and little Percy—"the merriest babe in the world"—migrated in the middle of June from Pisa to Leghorn. The Gisbornes' house, Casa Ricci, being now unoccupied, was at their service. Here they proposed to remain a month or two, and then seek some shelter, chiefly for the babe's sake, from the summer heats. The experience of the past had thrown a shadow of uncertainty over

\* Medwin, "Life of Shelley," vol. ii. pp. 9, 10. Peacock says that Florence was the alleged scene of the outrage, in the reality of which he did not believe. Both Mrs. Shelley's and Miss Clairmont's journals note on May 6, 1819 (the day before Shelley, in Rome, sat to Miss Curran for his portrait), "Adventure of Shelley at the post-office."

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all their plans for the future. "Our little Percy," his mother wrote to Miss Curran, "is a thriving, forward child; but after what has happened, I own it appears to me a fading cloud, all these hopes that we so earnestly dwell on." And Shelley, "As to *us*,—we are uncertain people, who are chased by the spirit of our destiny from purpose to purpose, like clouds by the wind." But if some of their hopes were dupes, Mary's apprehensions for the babe happily proved to be liars.

The first days at Casa Ricci were not joyous days. "We are unhappy and discontented," writes Mary in her journal on June 17. It was a passing ailment of the babe which on that day had specially troubled her; but now, beside the anxiety on Godwin's behalf, and the annoyance caused by Paolo's villainy, a fresh coil of mischief was tangling itself around their hearts. Since Claire had parted from her little Allegra at Este, in October, 1818, she had not seen her child, and had received but scant tidings from Venice—tidings which to a hungry mother's heart seemed even scantier than they actually were. In January, 1819, Mary had heard from Mrs. Hoppner that the little one had been entrusted by her, with Byron's consent, to a maid of her choice, and that she suffered constantly from the cold. "*Mon petit brille*," wrote Mrs. Hoppner, "*et il est toujours gai et sautillant, et Allegra, par contre, est devenue tranquille et sérieuse comme une petite vieille, ce qui nous peine beaucoup*." She regretted that Miss Clairmont should insist on the child's remaining at Venice, in an unwholesome climate, for the ill effects of which she received no compensating advantages from a father whose life was now "*une débauche affreuse*." Byron, she added, would certainly never restore the child to her mother; nothing good was to be hoped for on behalf of the dear little one, unless Providence should provide for the innocent in ways which man could not foresee. Four months later, Claire was informed of Mrs. Vavassour's proposal to adopt and provide for Allegra—a proposal to which, involving as it did the entire surrender

of his paternal authority, Byron refused to accede. Then followed a blank of dreary silence. "The most pressing entreaties on my part, as well as Claire's," wrote Mary Shelley on September 18, "cannot draw a single line from Venice. It is now six months since we have heard, even in an indirect manner, from there.\* God knows what has happened, or what has not! I suppose Shelley must go to see what has become of the little thing; yet how or when I know not, for he has never recovered from his fatigue at Rome." At length, by November, their anxieties were relieved, and Mary could report to Miss Curran that all was going on well at Venice (November 18). "Letter from Madame Hoppner," Claire enters in her journal (January 8, 1820). "The Hero is gone to Ravenna." At Ravenna, in the palace of Count Guiccioli, under the authority of Byron's mistress, Allegra's lot might indeed be hard. Claire longed passionately once more to embrace her child. "I beg from you," she wrote to Byron,† "the indulgence of a visit from my child, because that I am weaker every day and more miserable. I have already proved in ten thousand ways that I have so loved her as to have commanded, nay, to have destroyed, such of my feelings as would have been injurious to her welfare. You answer my request by menacing, if I do not continue to suffer in silence, that you will inflict the greatest of all evils on my child—you threaten to put her in a convent where she will be equally divided from us both. . . . This calls to my remembrance the story in the Bible, where Solomon judges between the two women; the false parent was willing the child should be

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\* "Six months" somewhat overstates the actual time.

† From a rough draft in Miss Clairmont's handwriting. A letter dated April 27 [1820] is referred to as having been received. On April 30 had come a letter from Mrs. Hoppner, which Claire describes as "concerning green fruit and God." On May 1, Claire writes in her journal, "I spend the day in cogitation;" some bitter words about Byron are partially effaced. May 2, "Send letter to Madame Hoppner, with an enclosure for Ravenna." On May 3 came "a letter from Albè," and next day Claire writes to Albè. The passage given above probably formed part of the enclosure for Ravenna or the letter of May 3.

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divided, but the feelings of the real one made her consent to any deprivation rather than her child should be destroyed: so I am willing to undergo any affliction rather than her whole life should be spoilt by a convent education."

Claire's impulse was to start immediately for Ravenna, and endeavour to come to an understanding with Byron. Shelley was prepared to act as her escort. But, on second thoughts, it was held that Claire's presence in Ravenna could not serve her cause; rather, it would tend to exasperate Byron against her. In May, Shelley addressed a letter to Byron, expressing regret that his lordship should have written to Claire with so little tenderness or sympathy; admitting that in her letters, which Shelley did not see, she may have said vexatious things; and pleading that she should be forgiven for her very weakness' sake. Five months later he wrote again. "I have no conception," he says, "of what Claire's letters to you contain, and but an imperfect one on the subject of her correspondence with you at all. One or two of her letters, but not lately, I have indeed seen; but as I thought them extremely childish and absurd, and requested her not to send them, and she afterwards told me that she had written and sent others in place of them, I cannot tell if those which I saw on that occasion were sent to you or not. I wonder, however, at your being provoked at what Claire writes; though that she should write what is provoking is very probable. You are conscious of performing your duty to Allegra, and your refusal to allow her to visit Claire at this distance you conceive to be part of that duty. That Claire should have wished to see her is natural. That her disappointment should vex her, and her vexation make her write absurdly, is all in the usual order of things. But, poor thing, she is very unhappy and in bad health, and she ought to be treated with as much indulgence as possible. The weak and the foolish are in this respect the kings—they can do no wrong."\*

\* The original of this letter was sold in 1879, at the auction of Mr. J. Ridgeway's collection of autographs.

Shelley declined to be "the instrument of the communication of Claire's sentiments or wishes" to Byron; "of course I should be always happy," he adds, "to convey yours to her." \* CHAP.  
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Mary's state of nervous agitation, caused by anxiety about her father, Claire's eager hunger for a sight of Allegra, did not predispose them to quietude or harmony in their mutual relations. Misunderstandings between them grew frequent, with little, perhaps, that deserved blame on either side. "A better day than most days," Mary records in her journal (June 8), "and good reason for it, though Shelley is not well. Claire away at Pugnano." And Claire, in her journal for July 4, with her way of bitter jesting, breaks into a rhyme—

"Heigh-ho ! the Claire and the Ma  
Find something to fight about every day."

Among the "moral causes" disturbing Shelley's health, these unhappy incidents occurring between Mary and Claire must also be reckoned.

Yet life at Casa Ricci had its pleasures. Here it was, near bustling Leghorn, that Shelley and Mary, wandering on a beautiful summer evening "among the lanes whose myrtle-hedges were the bowers of fire-flies," heard the carolling of the skylark which inspired that spirit-winged song known to all lovers of English poetry—a song vibrating still with such a keen and pure intensity. And here Shelley wrote the most delightful of all poetical epistles—his letter to Maria Gisborne. In Henry Reveley's workshop, which he had taken for his study, surrounded by

"Forms of unimaginable wood,  
To puzzle Tubal Cain and all his brood ;  
Great screws, and cones, and wheels, and grooved blocks,"

he sailed his paper boat, not now on lake or river, but in

\* On August 25, 1820, Byron wrote declining all correspondence with Claire. Shelley, in his letter to Byron of September 17, begs that regular intelligence of Allegra's health may be sent.



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"Plotting dark spells and devilish enginery,—  
The self-impelling steam-wheels of the mind."

"The Libeccio here howls like a chorus of fiends all day," Shelley wrote to Peacock, "and the weather is just pleasant,—not at all hot, the days being very misty and the nights divinely serene." In his poem the Libeccio is heard raging without the workshop; on the mountains gathers the thunder-smoke—

"Folded athwart their shoulders broad and bare;  
The ripe corn under the undulating air  
Undulates like an ocean; and the vines  
Are trembling wide in all their trellised lines."

But at night there is moonlight and divine serenity:—

"Afar the contadino's song is heard,  
Rude but made sweet by distance, and a bird  
Which cannot be the nightingale, and yet  
I know none else that sings so sweet as it  
At this late hour:—and then all is still."

Readers of this admirable poem will be inclined to ascribe to some passing fit of depression Shelley's complaint to Medwin (July 20) that his passion for nature was suffering a decay: "I see the mountains, the sky, and the trees from my windows, and recollect, as an old man does the mistress of his youth, the raptures of a more familiar intercourse, but without his regrets, for their forms are yet living in my mind."

With Mary the days passed not unpleasantly. There was amusement in assisting at the christening in Italian fashion of Annunziata's babe—the new-comer to Mrs. Gisborne's man and maid. It was a pleasant jest for her to fancy "yellow-haired Pollonia"—Apollonia Ricci—pining, love-lorn, in the absence of Henry Reveley. Nor when Giuseppe and Annunziata one evening fell to bitter words was the scene, after all,

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very different from a fragment of diverting Italian comedy, with abundant gesticulation and mirthful surprises. "I'll shoot you! I'll shoot you!" cried Shelley, pistol in hand, as he rushed upon the furious husband. "The startled fellow ran for his very life, Shelley after him; till the former, coming to a shrubbery of laurels, managed to slip under them. Shelley in his eagerness darting past him, he in a few minutes found it possible to dodge back into the house unperceived. Shelley, seeing him no more, at last went back to the house, where, to his unspeakable amazement, he found Giuseppe and Annunziata sitting together in the most amicable manner, addressing each other as 'Caro' and 'Carissima.' 'But were you not quarrelling even now?' exclaimed the perplexed poet. 'No, signor; we never quarrelled.' 'But I have been running after you in order to shoot you!' 'No, signor, you never ran after me, for I have been sitting here for the last hour or more. You must have fancied all this.'" Mary, who had been let into the secret, confirming the lucky invention, Shelley "was at last utterly mystified, and half inclined himself to believe that he must have fancied it." \*

"It is not our custom, when we can help it," Shelley once wrote with reference to himself and Mary, "to divide our pleasures." In the summer of 1820 many of their happiest hours were possessions held in common by both. Having on June 26 finished reading Virgil together, on the next day but one they began Lucretius.† In the evenings Shelley read aloud from the Greek romances—among which the pastoral of Longus especially pleased him—or from Forteguerra's bright poem of chivalry, mirth, and satire, "Ricciardetto." Although unable as yet to be her husband's companion in his study of Greek literature, Mary was determined to follow him, even at

\* Miss Mathilde Blind recovered this story, and Mr. Rossetti printed it. The quarrel is referred to in an unpublished letter of Mrs. Shelley to Mrs. Gisborne.

† Claire, who had forgotten her Latin learnt in 1814, now began to study the language again, "which I pray," she writes in her journal, "I may continue."

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a distance. "I want Jones's 'Greek Grammar' very much for Mary, who is deep in Greek," Shelley wrote to Peacock; and the entry "Read Greek," repeated day after day in her journal, shows how resolutely Shelley's pupil went to work. He had himself entered with spirit on a delightful task as a translator—that of rendering into *ottava rima* the Homeric hymn, which tells the rogueries of the divine Autolycus in his precocious infancy—the "Hymn to Mercury." "Of course, my stanza," Shelley wrote, "precludes a literal translation. My next effort will be that it should be legible—a quality much to be desired in a translation." Shelley's "Hymn to Mercury" has not been charged with corrupting the youth; yet who can read it without falling in love with Knavery, and holding Honesty for a fool, and Trust, his brother, for a very simple gentleman? On July 14, Shelley brought his translation to an end. It has been noticed that the playful form of speech common to the "Hymn to Mercury" and the "Witch of Atlas" is not found elsewhere in Shelley's poetry. Are we to attribute it to his recent readings of "Ricciardetto"?

On June 24 and 25, Mary busied herself with the *Quarterly Review*. Possibly it was this which, recalling the late scandalous attack on his private life, led Shelley, on June 26, to address a letter to Southey, begging for an assurance that he—Shelley's former friendly entertainer at Keswick—was not the author of that unjust and rancorous article on "The Revolt of Islam." His own conviction, Shelley declared, was strong that Southey could not be his defamer; he recalled with pleasurable recollection the kindness which he had received in former days at Greta Hall. "That an unprincipled hireling, in default of what to answer in a published composition, should, without provocation, insult over the domestic calamities of a writer of the adverse party—to which, perhaps, their victim dares scarcely advert in thought; that he should make those calamities the theme of the foulest and the falsest slander; that all this should be done by a calumniator without

a name, with the cowardice, no less than the malignity of an assassin, is too common a piece of charity among Christians (Christ would have taught them better), too common a violation of what is due from man to man among the pretended friends to social order, to have drawn one remark from me, but that I would have you observe the arts practised by that party for which you have abandoned the cause to which your early writings were devoted. I had intended to have called on you, for the purpose of saying what I now write, on my return to England; but the wretched state of my health detains me here, and I fear leaves my enemy, were he such as I could contend with, an easy but a base victory, for I do not profess paper warfare. But there is a time for all things. I regret to say that I shall consider your neglecting to answer this letter a substantiation of the fact which it is intended to settle, and *therefore* I shall assuredly hear from you."

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To this letter Southey replied with a resolute desire to press home on Shelley what he regarded as truth, and with a sense that, as in former days he showed his goodwill by friendly offices of various kinds, so now it was his part, as the elder man, faithfully to instruct, to warn, and to rebuke. Shelley's friends had alleged ignorantly and falsely that he was the author of the criticism in the *Quarterly Review*. "I have never in any of my writings mentioned your name, or alluded to you even in the remotest hint, either as a man or as an author. Except the 'Alastor,' which you sent me, I have never read or seen any of your publications since you were at Keswick.\* The specimens which I happen to have seen in reviews and newspapers have confirmed my opinion that your powers for poetry are of a high order; but the manner in which those powers have been employed is such as to prevent me from feeling any desire to see more of productions so monstrous in their kind, and pernicious in their

\* Southey probably had read the Hermit of Marlow's pamphlet on "Reform," but without knowing the writer's name.

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tendency." "I reply to you, sir," Southey goes on, "because I cannot think of you without the deepest compassion. Eight years ago you were somewhat displeased when I declined disputing with you upon points which are beyond the reach of the human intellect—telling you that the great difference between us was that you were then nineteen and I was eight and thirty. Would that the difference were no greater now! You wrote to me when you sent me your 'Alastor' that, as you tolerated my opinions, you supposed I should tolerate yours. Few persons are less intolerant than myself by disposition as well as by principle, but I cannot admit that any such reciprocity is justly to be claimed. Opinions are to be judged by their effects—and what has been the fruit of yours? Do they enable you to look backward with complacency, or forward with hope? Have you found in them a rule of life conducive either to your own happiness, or to that of those who were most nearly and dearly connected with you? Or rather, have they not brought immediate misery upon others, and guilt which is all but irremediable on yourself?" Intreating him to look to the evidence of the Christian faith, and praying that God in His infinite mercy might bring the wanderer to a better mind, Southey continues, "This is not the language of party animosity nor of personal ill-will. Of the latter you will at once acquit me; and if you do not acquit me as readily of the former, it is because you do not know me enough, and are too much under its influence yourself. I can think of you only as of an individual whom I have known, and of whom I had once entertained high hopes, admiring his talents, giving him credit for good feelings and virtuous desires, and whom I now regard not more with condemnation than with pity."

Shelley's reply is important as an earnest pleading against judgment pronounced upon him by one whom he could not suspect of ill-will, and whom it was not in his power to despise.

*Shelley to Southey.*

Pisa, August 17, 1820.

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DEAR SIR,

Allow me to acknowledge the sincere pleasure which I received from the first paragraph of your letter. The disavowal it contained was just such as I firmly anticipated.

Allow me also to assure you that no menace employed in my letter could have the remotest application to yourself. I am not indeed aware that it contained any menace. I recollect expressing what contempt I felt, in the hope that you might meet the wretched hireling, who has so closely imitated your style as to deceive all but those who knew you into a belief that he was you, at Murray's or somewhere, and that you would inflict my letter on him as a recompense for sowing ill-will between those who wish each other all good, as you and I do.

I confess your recommendation to adopt the system of ideas you call Christianity has little weight with me, whether you mean the popular superstition in all its articles, or some other more refined theory with respect to those events and opinions which put an end to the graceful religion of the Greeks. To judge of the doctrines by their effects, one would think that this religion were called the religion of Christ and Charity *ut lucus a non lucendo*, when I consider the manner in which they seem to have transformed the disposition and understanding of you and men of the most amiable manners and the highest accomplishments, so that even when recommending Christianity you cannot forbear breathing out defiance, against the express words of Christ. What would you have me think? You accuse me, on what evidence I cannot guess, of *guilt*—a bold word, sir, this, and one which would have required me to write to you in another tone had you addressed it to any one except myself. Instead, therefore, of refraining from “judging that you be not judged,” you not only judge but condemn, and that to a punishment which its victim must be either among the meanest or the loftiest not to regard as bitterer than death. But you are such a pure one as Jesus Christ found not in all Judea to throw the first stone against the woman taken in adultery!\*

With what care do the most tyrannical Courts of Judicature

\* A sentence almost identical appears near the close of Shelley's fragment “On the Punishment of Death:” “He is such a one as Jesus Christ found not in all Samaria,” etc.

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weigh evidence, and surround the accused with protecting forms ; with what reluctance do they pronounce their cruel and presumptuous decisions compared with you ! You select a single passage out of a life otherwise not only spotless, but spent in an impassioned pursuit of virtue, which looks like a blot, merely because I regulated my domestic arrangements without deferring to the notions of the vulgar, although I might have done so quite as conveniently had I descended to their base thoughts—this you call *guilt*.\* I might answer you in another manner, but I take God to witness, if such a Being is now regarding both you and me, and I pledge myself if we meet, as perhaps you expect, before Him after death, to repeat the same in His presence—that you accuse me wrongfully. I am innocent of ill, either done or intended ; the consequences you allude to flowed in no respect from me. If you were my friend I could tell you a history that would make you open your eyes ; but I shall certainly never make the public my familiar confidant.

You say you judge of opinions by the fruits ; so do I, but by their remote and permanent fruits—such fruits of rash judgment as Christianity seems to have produced in you. The immediate fruits of all new opinions are indeed calamity to the promulgators and professors ; but we see the end of nothing, and it is in acting well, in contempt of present advantage, that virtue consists.

I need not to be instructed that the opinion of the ruling party, to which you have attached yourself, always exacts, contumeliously receives, and never reciprocates toleration. But “there is a tide in the affairs of men”—it is rising while we speak.

Another specimen of your Christianity is the judgment you form of the spirit of my verses from the abuse of the Reviews. I have desired Mr. Ollier to send you those last published ; they may amuse you, for one of them—indeed neither of them have anything to do with those speculations on which we differ.

I cannot hope that you will be candid enough to feel, or, if you feel, to own that you have done ill in accusing, even in your mind, an innocent and a persecuted man, whose only real offence is the holding opinions something similar to those which you once held respecting the existing state of society. Without this, further correspondence, the object for which I renewed it being once

\* Does this mean that Shelley, if he had so desired, might have obtained a divorce from his first wife ?

obtained, must, from the differences in our judgment, be irksome and tedious. I hope some day to meet you in London, and ten minutes' conversation is worth ten folios of writing. Meanwhile assure yourself that among all your good wishers you have none who wish you better than, dear sir,

Your very faithful and obedient servant,

P. B. SHELLEY.

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P.S.—I ought not to omit that I have had sickness enough, and that at this moment I have so severe a pain in my side that I can hardly write. All this is of no account in the favour of what you or any one else calls Christianity; surely it would be better to wish me health and healthful sensations. I hope the chickens will not come home to roost.\*

One other letter followed, in which Southey took upon himself to review Shelley's conduct, and again exhorted, admonished, and advised. In the Scriptures and the Book of Common Prayer might be found the antidote to all the evil of his heart. To this letter Shelley did not reply; it was Southey's express wish that the correspondence should cease, and where was the good of prolonging a painful discussion which could lead to no satisfactory issue?

With the first days of August the heat at Leghorn grew intense. "The weather is too hot for study," Mary records in her journal. It was now far advanced in the season for the Baths of Pisa, but the more fashionable Baths of Lucca had drawn away many of its former visitors, and when Shelley, late in July, had gone to seek a house, he had not found it difficult to obtain an excellent one—Casa Prinzi—which he hired for three months at about thirteen sequins a month.† The village and baths of San Giuliano di Pisa, about four miles distant from Pisa, lie at the foot of the ridge of moun-

\* Southey had written that Shelley might live to bless God for a visitation of sickness, if its effect were to bring him to a better mind. The last words of the postscript refer to the motto of "The Curse of Kehama"—"Curses are like young chickens, they always come home to roost." The correspondence of Southey with Shelley is printed in the Appendix to my edition of "Southey's Correspondence with Caroline Bowles."

† A sequin was worth eleven or twelve francs.



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tains to the north of the city. With their sloping olive-grounds, and marble quarries, and shadowy dells, the hills are a delightful change from the monotonous landscape of the plain of which they form the boundary. The warm baths are tranquilizing in their effect, and served to soothe Shelley's nervous irritability. It was probably no cause of regret to him that the large ball-room and card-rooms were less lively and crowded than those of the neighbouring Baths of Lucca.

On August 5, at five o'clock in the morning, Shelley and his party arrived at their new abode. The weather was now delightful; the heavens deep and radiant; and all the surroundings promised pleasure or undisturbed repose. The 12th of August was one of the hottest days of the month, and on that day, while Mary and Claire visited Lucca, viewed the churches, and drove around the ramparts, Shelley climbed in solitude to the Monte San Pellegrino, a mountain on the summit of which is a chapel, the resort of pilgrims at certain seasons of the year. Next morning—the morning of Sunday—he descended to the Baths. “The excursion,” writes Mrs. Shelley, “delighted him while it lasted, though he exerted himself too much, and the effect was considerable lassitude and weakness on his return. During the expedition he conceived the idea, and wrote in the three days immediately succeeding to his return, the ‘Witch of Atlas.’” On that mountain pilgrimage to the ecclesiastical shrine, Shelley had beheld for a moment, through the veil in which she hides her loveliness, the form of the great and beneficent enchantress—she whose shadow is the beauty of the world; whose words, though too fine to be articulate to mortal ear, fill us with a longing for all high truth; whose presence, though invisible, quickens within us all hope and joy and love. The three days which followed sufficed for Shelley to encircle with exquisite and inexhaustible arabesques of the fancy his central idea. It was a surprise to him when Mary expressed herself as but half pleased with his delighted creation. She had

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perceived that he suffered in his imaginative isolation ; suffered through lack of the sympathy of the lovers of literature in his own country. "I am, speaking literally, infirm of purpose," he wrote to Peacock (November, 1820). "I have great designs, and feeble hopes of ever accomplishing them. I read books, and though I am ignorant enough, they seem to teach me nothing. To be sure, the reception the public have given me might go far enough to damp any man's enthusiasm." Such depression of spirit would be blown away like a cloud, Mary believed, by one strong breath of popular applause ; and, with restored strength of heart, all his faculties would organize themselves for yet higher achievement. It was not because she was "critic-bitten" that she was inclined to discourage the treatment by Shelley of themes which to most readers must appear vaporous, unaccountable, "hollow like a breathing shell ;" but because she saw that a long and great career for his genius was all but impossible unless a bond of sympathy were established between the singer and his audience. Shelley took her kindly chiding in good part, and apologized for his fantastic poem with charming good temper. What if his poem disport itself in kitten-like antics ? though it catch no mice,

"May it not leap and play as grown cats do  
Till its claws come ? Prithee, for this one time  
Content thee with a visionary rhyme.

"What hand would crush the silken-winged fly,  
The youngest of inconstant April's minions,  
Because it cannot climb the purest sky,  
Where the swan sings amid the sun's dominions ?  
Not thine. Thou knowest 'tis its doom to die  
When Day shall hide within her twilight pinions  
The lucent eyes and the eternal smile  
Serene as thine, which lent it life awhile."

We may rejoice at the fault-finding which drew forth so graceful a rejoinder as the stanzas to Mary.

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To have looked into the eyes of the Witch of Atlas does not, in truth, make one indifferent to the best realities of this world. In 1820, the spirit of freedom, like fire trodden underfoot but not extinguished, burst into a flame in the South of Europe. Shelley was an eagerly interested observer of public events. In March came tidings to Pisa of the successful insurrection in Spain. "I suppose," wrote Mary to Mrs. Gisborne (March 26), "that you have heard the news—that the beloved Ferdinand has proclaimed the Constitution of 1812, and called the Cortes. The Inquisition is abolished, the dungeons opened, and the patriots pouring out. This is good. I should like to be in Madrid now." At Naples, the Carbonari had been watching their opportunity, and it was not long in arising. On July 2, the troops mutinied, and the king found himself deserted; the people from all the provinces joined the revolt. Without striking a blow, Ferdinand yielded to the insurgents, and proclaimed the Spanish Constitution of 1812. A bloody insurrection immediately followed in Sicily; here the troops were on the side of the viceroy and his junta; but on October 5 Palermo capitulated to the forces despatched in aid of the insurgents by the revolutionary government at Naples.

"Report of the Revolution at Naples," Claire writes in her journal (July 16). "The people assembled round the palace demanding a constitution; the king ordered his troops to fire and disperse the crowd; they refused, and he has now promised a constitution. The head of them is the Duke of Campo Chiaro. This is glorious, and is produced by the Revolution in Spain." While seeking a house at the Baths, Shelley heard of the first outbreak in Sicily. "There is bad news from Palermo," he wrote to Mary (July 23). "The soldiers resisted the people, and a terrible slaughter, amounting, it is said, to four thousand men, ensued. The event, however, was as it should be. Sicily, like Naples, is free. By the brief and partial accounts of the Florence paper, it

appears that the enthusiasm of the inhabitants was prodigious, and that the women fought from the houses, raining down boiling oil on the assailants." And on September 1, "At Naples, the constitutional party have declared to the Austrian minister that if the emperor should make war upon them, their first action would be to put to death *all* the members of the royal family—a necessary and most just measure, when the forces of the combatants, as well as the merits of their respective causes, are so unequal. That kings should be everywhere the hostages for liberty were admirable." From which utterance of Shelley it appears that he did not rely under every circumstance on the sufficiency of argument and moral suasion to control mankind; on occasions he would summon to his aid, if needful, the logic of the sword.\* The sword, however, which Shelley himself could fitliest wield was that of keen-edged song. In the spring of the year, moved by the uprising of the Spaniards, he had written his "Ode to Liberty," in which the grave Muse of History is summoned to utter oracles of hope for the cause of freedom. In August, between the 17th and 25th of the month, was written the "Ode to Naples."† Recollections of Shelley's visit to Pompeii and Baiæ mingle in it with his aspiring thoughts and visions of the future; we listen to the stir and flitting of autumnal leaves in the desolate streets like the light footfalls of spirits; we hear the deep muttering of the mountain; in such sounds we become aware of prophesyings around us which grow articulate and must be uttered.

Affairs in England contrasted strangely, as it seemed to Shelley, with those of Italy and Spain. Under the rule of George IV. and Castlereagh no event took place in any way likely to inspire an ode to Liberty. In March, Shelley heard with deep regret of the miserable and criminal attempt to

\* In "A Philosophical View of Reform," Shelley maintains the right of resistance as inherent in the people.

† Mrs. Shelley's entry in the journal, dated August 25, records the events of a week.

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assassinate the ministry, the Cato Street conspiracy. "I have a motto on a ring in Italian," he writes to Peacock—"Il buon tempo verrà." There is a tide, both in public and private affairs, which awaits both men and nations." But the events of the spring and summer on the continent of Europe made it hard to wait for the "good time" which had not yet dawned, as Shelley conceived, for his own country. "How soon will England itself," he asks, ". . . be caught by the sacred fire?" Instead of being caught by any sacred fire, England in 1820 was attacked by the sham ardours of a vulgar enthusiasm. Queen Caroline, saint and martyr, had returned home, and her progress from Dover to London, and through the streets of the metropolis, was "one continued triumph." Lord Castlereagh had read the king's message to the House of Lords, commending an inquiry into the queen's conduct, and had offered the green bag full of poisonous venom for their inspection. The hopes of the nation seemed to hang on the result of the inquiry and the second reading of the bill of pains and penalties. To Shelley this particular instance of heroine-worship seemed a conspicuous example of "the generous gullibility of the English nation." Not that he wished her Sacred Majesty any harm; but why should a vulgar woman, whose habits and manners any one would shun in private life, be "turned into a heroine because she is a queen, or, as a collateral reason, because her husband is a king"? "How can the English endure the mountains of cant which are cast upon them about this vulgar cook-maid they call a queen?"—so Shelley wrote to Mr. Gisborne (June 30). "It is scarcely less disgusting than the tyranny of her husband, who, on his side, uses a battery of the same cant. It is really time for the English to wean themselves from this nonsense, for really their situation is too momentous to justify them in attending to Punch and his wife. Let the nation stand aside, and suffer them to beat till, like most combatants that are left to themselves, they would kiss and be friends. And peers and

peeresses to stalk along the street in ermine! It is really time to give over this mummery. Whilst 'that two-handed engine,' etc. The National Debt is indeed a two-edged sword." Brougham and the Liberal party in England, championing the virtue of the queen, were less clear-sighted than Shelley, who from a distance looked on, and, unaffected by the heats of vulgar passion, could perceive the gross indiscretions of her conduct.

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On August 24, Mrs. Mason came from Pisa to the Baths to spend the day with her friends.\* It was a fair-day at St. Giuliano, and the square beneath Shelley's window was full of movement and noise. While Shelley read aloud the "Ode to Liberty," he was riotously accompanied, says Mrs. Shelley, by the grunting of a number of pigs brought for sale to the fair. "He compared it to the 'chorus of frogs' in the satiric drama of Aristophanes; and it being an hour of merriment, and one ludicrous association suggesting another, he imagined a political-satirical drama on the circumstances of the day, to which the pigs would serve as chorus—and 'Swellfoot' was begun." "Swellfoot the Tyrant," which dramatizes in satirical fashion the affair of Queen Caroline, is not one of Shelley's happier inspirations. Allied with beauty, his elvish *espièglerie* might have some of the grace of a will-o'-the-wisp in its antics; so we see it in certain stanzas of the "Witch of Atlas." The theme of "Swellfoot" is ugly, and its author lacked that robust humour which can discover sources of mirth or satire in the gross stuff of life. "Œdipus Tyrannus, or Swellfoot the Tyrant," was published in London in 1820. Horace Smith, it seems, acted as intermediary between the publisher and the author, whose name was concealed. When only seven copies of the pamphlet had been sold, the bookseller was induced by Alderman Rothwell to suppress the publication,

\* I think there can be little doubt that the entry in the diary, "On 24th, Mrs. Mason comes for the day . . . begin 'Swellfoot the Tyrant,'" ascertains for us who was the friend who came to visit Shelley and his wife.

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thus averting a prosecution about to be instituted by some loyal inhabitants of the ward of Cheap, in accordance with resolutions of the wardmote.\*

The publisher who had issued seven copies of "Swellfoot the Tyrant," was Johnston, of Cheapside. Whether the pamphlet had been offered to Ollier and had been declined, we know not, but we know that Shelley's feeling towards his principal publishers was now far from friendly. When leaving England he had entered into an arrangement with them, in accordance with which they were to furnish Leigh Hunt with money, and were to hold Shelley their debtor for the sum advanced. Shelley now surmised that Ollier had been too prudent to risk money on security which may have seemed insufficient, and he felt aggrieved that he had not himself been allowed to have a voice in the affair. "I am afraid his [Ollier's] demerits are very heavy," Shelley wrote to Hunt (May 1, 1820); "they must have been so before *you* could have perceived them. I should like to know how he has behaved, though I strongly suspect what the affair is. I am afraid that I, to a certain degree, am in his power, there being no other bookseller upon whom I can depend for publishing any of my works; though if by any chance they should become popular, he would be as tame as a lamb. And in fact they are all rogues. It is less the character of the individual than the situation in which he is placed which determines him to be honest or dishonest. Perhaps we ought to regard an honest bookseller, or an honest seller of anything else, in the present state of human affairs, as a kind of Jesus Christ. The system of human society as it exists at present must be overthrown from the foundations, with all its superstructure of maxims and of forms, before we

\* These statements are derived from a manuscript note in a copy of "Swellfoot," possessed by Mr. F. Locker. It seems unproven that the Society for the Suppression of Vice had (as Mrs. Shelley believed) threatened to prosecute. See Mr. Forman's "Shelley Library," i. p. 98. The Rat and the Leech of Shelley's drama were common property of the pamphleteers and verse-mongers. See the picture in which these vermin feed on John Bull's corpse and on the Tree of Liberty in "The Queen and Magna Charta" (Dolby, 1820).

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shall find anything but disappointment in our intercourse with any but a few select spirits. This remedy does not seem to be the easiest. But the generous few are not the less held to tend with all their efforts towards it. If faith is a virtue in any case, it is so in politics rather than religion; as having a power of producing a belief in that which is at once a prophecy and a cause. So far the Preacher." Shelley still continued to publish with the brothers Ollier, but the old cordial relations were never entirely restored. No ground exists for believing that there was any conduct deserving of blame on the part of the publishers.\*

It was one of the infirmities of Shelley's character that, from thinking the best of friend or acquaintance, he could of a sudden and with insufficient cause pass over to the other side and think the worst. Justice, after all, is perhaps a rarer virtue than charity. When the Gisbornes, with Henry Reveley, left Italy for England, Shelley had urged that they should consider only their own future interests, and that as to the unfinished steamboat lying at Leghorn, in which so many of his sequins had been invested, it should not enter into their calculations. If Henry could obtain almost any situation, he ought, said Shelley, to remain in England. "My object," he wrote to his friends, "was solely your true advantage, and it is when I am baffled of this, by any attention to a mere form, that I shall be ill requited. . . . A year, a month, a week, at Henry's age, and with his purposes, ought not to be unemployed. It was the depth with which I felt this truth which impelled me to incite him to this adventure of the steamboat." If the Gisbornes decided to sell their possessions at Casa Ricci, Shelley would see to the affair. "Remit the matter to me, and I will cast off my habitual character, and attend to the minutest points." Early in October, the Gisbornes and Henry were back in Italy, and Shelley wrote with-

\* Shelley (September 6, 1819) had expressed an admiration of Charles Ollier's tale, "Altham and his Wife," out of all proportion to its merits.



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out delay, requesting the pleasure of a visit from them. The visit was promised, but was not paid. A little later, and Shelley was in a whirl of indignation against the whole family; even Mrs. Gisborne, though “δημοκρατική” and “ἄθρη”—the instructor who had led him to the starry and flowery “Autos” of Calderon—is included in the general condemnation. The Shelley invariably mild, gentle, and gracious, is the creature of a myth; Godwin did not err when he spoke of his son-in-law’s temper as “occasionally fiery, resentful, and indignant.” Happily his indignation was directed against the violences and frauds of the world more often than against individual men and women; and he possessed a power of escaping from his own wrath which is rare, and of entering through his sympathy and imagination into the position of one whom he had for a time misconceived and misunderstood. “The Gisbornes are acting as ill as possible about the steamboat,” Shelley wrote on October 29. “Mr. Gisborne wants to apply the engine to their own use in working a bellows to cast iron—a mere scheme to defraud us. Henry came to the Bagni the other day, and I had a long and very explicit conversation with him, the result of which was that if the affairs which remained of the steamboat were to be carried on through Mr. Gisborne, I absolutely refused to take any further part in the concern, except to receive whatever money they choose to give me as proceeding from the sale of the materials. At the same time, should he decide on taking that side of the alternative, I assured him that I should take some pains to acquaint my friends with the vile treatment which I had received from him and his family.”\* An outbreak of vituperation follows as violent as that of which in earlier days Miss Hitchener was the victim. But Shelley’s resentment was short-lived.† In November, he wrote to congratulate Mr.

\* To Claire Clairmont: Pisa, October 29, 1820.

† Yet from time to time he again grew suspicious, and gives his suspicion a vehement utterance.

Gisborne on his conquest of the "Iliad." "You must have been astonished at the perpetually increasing magnificence of the last seven books; Homer then truly begins to be himself. The battle of the Scamander, the funeral of Patroclus, and the high and solemn close of the whole bloody tale in tenderness and inexpressible sorrow, are wrought in a manner incomparable with anything of the same kind. The 'Odyssey' is sweet, but there is nothing like this. . . . My kindest remembrances to Mrs. Gisborne, and best wishes for your health and happiness" As to the steamboat, we are assured by Henry Reveley that her floating hull and the unfinished machinery were sold by public auction, and that the proceeds were duly handed over by Mr. Gisborne to Shelley.

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The intemperate objurgation, of which the least violent sentences are quoted above, was uttered in a letter of October 29 to Claire Clairmont. At length Claire, under Mrs. Mason's advice, had taken a decisive step; had freed herself from the pain of her position in a household where her presence was felt at times by one at least of its members to be an inconvenience, and had accepted an engagement as governess in the family of Professor Bojti at Florence. To Shelley it was a grief to part from one who had been a close companion during many years, but he was convinced that the step now taken was for the good of Claire. On October 20, he accompanied her to Florence, and saw her next day to her new quarters at Casa Bojti, opposite the Pitti Palace. She was far from strong in health; far from happy in her circumstances and her temper; separated from her child; poor, and engaged in an employment which might be laborious and irksome; alone, among strange faces. Shelley could not but feel very tenderly towards the exile from his home, and he was aware that Mary, though the reverse of ill-disposed towards Claire, could but partially enter into his desire to watch over the unfriended girl with a zeal of fond protectiveness. When he wrote to Claire he longed to cheer her drooping spirit with cordial words, which should

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make her feel in her solitude how true and deep was the love of at least one faithful friend. Such words might have seemed to Mary needless, or excessive in their effusion, and therefore they should be seen by Claire alone. The first two or three letters of Shelley to Claire, written when the sense of her desolate position was keen with him, contain utterances which, if we did not know how ardently Shelley gave himself away in friendship, might be regarded as the speech of a lover. The tone afterwards grew more calm and measured; during considerable intervals the correspondence was left altogether to Mary. But though Shelley clearly perceived Claire's errors of judgment and infirmities of temper, she never ceased to be cherished by him—cherished even for her weakness' sake.\* Perhaps it would have been braver and better if he had trusted more to Mary's generosity of feeling; but a man's generosity of feeling and a woman's cannot always be made to work together. We can well believe that Claire had presented to Mary a very different side of herself from that which she presented to Shelley; it would, accordingly, be impossible that Mary should feel towards her as Shelley felt. Letters of pleasant gossip came to Claire from Mary; there was at present no breach between them, but also assuredly no ardour of affection. More could not have been expected from Mary Shelley; and in such cases it is a man's wisdom to have a loyal regard even for what may seem the infirmities of heart of one who has given her entire self to him.

When Shelley returned from Florence to the Baths (October 22), he was not alone. His cousin and former school-fellow at Sion House Academy, Thomas Medwin, captain in the 24th Light Dragoons, recently returned from Bombay, was with him. Medwin had a *dilettante* love of letters, and lately, while staying near Geneva, he had sought the benefit of Shelley's criticism on an unpublished poem, "The Pindarees,"

\* As when Shelley wrote of her to Byron (Sept. 17, 1820): "The weak and the foolish are in this respect the kings—they can do no wrong."

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and had received an invitation to visit his old companion in Italy, "the Paradise of exiles." "If you will be glad to see an old friend, who will be very glad to see you—if this is any inducement—come to Italy." At Pisa, in the Tre Donzelle, they met for the first time since 1813. "It was nearly seven years since we had parted," writes Medwin, "but I should immediately have recognized him in a crowd. His figure was emaciated, and somewhat bent, owing to near-sightedness and his being forced to lean over his books with his eyes almost touching them; his hair, still profuse and curling naturally, was partially interspersed with grey; but his appearance was youthful, and his countenance, whether grave or animated, strikingly intellectual. There was also a freshness and purity in his complexion that he never lost."\* The season for the Baths ended in September, and now it was late October. In the deserted watering-place the presence of an old friend brought some brightness, and it was not yet discovered that the inanity of Medwin's mind and character could prove weighty in the oppression of its boredom. During Shelley's brief absence Mary had studied in Villani's chronicle and Sismondi's history for the novel—"Valperga, or the Life and Adventures of Castruccio, Prince of Lucca"—on which she was now engaged; but she had also observed with unusual attention the signs and portents of the weather. "Rainy day and rainy morning," she writes in her journal on the day of Shelley's return; "as bad weather as is possible in Italy. A

\* The following description of Shelley by Miss Clairmont is not without interest, but having a somewhat wrought-up air of panegyric, it is not inserted in my text. "[Shelley] was beautiful with that kind of beauty which Bacon says is the best, 'that which a picture cannot express.' It dwelt upon his countenance, it enshrined his person, and seemed to be a perpetual emanation from himself rather than any union of exquisite proportions either in form or figure. The beholder saw that he was pre-eminent in beauty, but could not discover in what that pre-eminence consisted. Other men had as fair, open, and commanding foreheads, and as dark and luxuriant brown hair to shade them, eyes as full of poetic fire, and lips as expressive of gentle serenity; but they wanted that nameless something which touched the heart at every glance, and subdued it to silent homage." (From a manuscript note-book.)

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little patience and we shall have St. Martin's summer. At sunset the arch of clear sky appears where it sets, becoming larger and larger, until, at seven o'clock, the dark clouds are alone over Monte Nero; Venus shines bright in the clear azure; and the trunks of the trees are tinged with the silvery light of the rising moon." Next day and next the rain descended; and when the downpour ceased, the waters rose in flood. "*October 25.*—Rain all night. The banks of the Serchio break, and by dark all the baths are overflowed. Water four feet deep in our house; the weather fine." The garden behind the Casa Prinni was on the banks of the canal which branches from the Serchio to the Arno; the rising waters overflowed the garden and burst open the doors of the house. "It was a picturesque sight at night," says Mrs. Shelley, "to see the peasants driving the cattle from the plains below to the hills above the baths. A fire was kept up to guide them across the ford; and the forms of the men and the animals showed in dark relief against the red glare of the flame, which was reflected again in the waters that filled the square." Having escaped in a boat, says Medwin, from the upper windows of their flooded house, Shelley, his wife and son, on October 29, found a resting-place in Pisa. "We have now removed," he wrote to Claire on that day, "to a lodging on the Lung' Arno, which is sufficiently commodious, and for which we pay thirteen sequins a month. It is next door to that marble palace, and is called Palazzo Galetti, consisting of an excellent mezzanino, and of two rooms on the fourth story, all to the south, and with two fireplaces. The rooms above, one of which is Medwin's room, and the other my study (congratulate me on my seclusion), are delightfully pleasant, and to-day I shall be employed in arranging my books and gathering my papers about me. Mary has a very good room below, and there is plenty of space for the babe. I expect the water of Pisa to relieve me, if indeed the disease be what is conjectured."

This return to Pisa in the autumn of 1820 marks the opening of a new period in Shelley's life.\*

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\* Medwin says rightly that the marble palace next door to the house in which Shelley lodged was that which bears over the entrance the enigmatical inscription "Alla Giornata" (the Palazzo Lanfreducci). In revising his book for a second edition, Medwin struck out the words "next door," and erroneously substituted the word "opposite." The transference of Shelley's possessions from the Baths appears, from a letter of his to Mrs. Hunt, not to have been completed until about November 11.

## CHAPTER IX.

SPRINGTIME AT PISA IN 1821 (JANUARY TO MAY, 1821).

CHAP. IX. Jan.-May, 1821. HITHERTO Shelley's life in Italy had passed in almost complete seclusion. At Leghorn, Mr. and Mrs. Gisborne ; at Rome, Miss Curran ; at Pisa, Mr. and Mrs. Mason, had been his only intimate associates. Now a company began to gather around him, and his life quickened with social interests. A little poem, at once playful and plaintive, written in the summer of 1821 at the Baths of St. Giuliano, tells of Shelley's alarm on hearing from Mary that the Aziola was in the neighbourhood : he had not yet learnt the Italian name of the little downy owl, and feared the intrusion of some tedious woman. Chance visitors were not welcome to him, especially when he would be occupied with his own imaginings or meditation. Yet solitude did not tend to make him cheerful. "Shelley never liked society in numbers," Mary wrote ; "it harassed and wearied him ; but neither did he like loneliness, and usually when alone sheltered himself against memory or reflection in a book. But with one or two whom he loved, he gave way to wild or joyous spirits, or in more serious conversation expounded his opinions with vivacity and eloquence. If an argument arose, no man ever argued better. He was clear, logical, and earnest in supporting his own views ; attentive, patient, and impartial while listening to those on the adverse side." Mary Shelley, for her own part, enjoyed the society of cultivated persons, and found in it the stimulant needed to

oppose her drooping spirits. "I have been pursued all my life," CHAP. IX,  
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1821. she wrote to Miss Clairmont in 1845, "by a lowness of spirits, which superinduces a certain irritability which often spoils me as a companion. I lament it and feel it, and know it, but that does not suffice. To be as I ought to be towards others (for very often this lowness does not disturb my inward tranquillity), I need to be a little tipsy. This is a sad confession, but a true one—anything of emotion that quickens the flow of my blood makes me not so much a happier as a better person." During the short remainder of his life Shelley was seldom quite solitary or unfriended, and Mary found in Pisa, among many acquaintances less agreeable, the exhilarating companionship of persons eminent for brightness of intellect or grace of manner.

On the day of Shelley's arrival at Pisa, however, the prospect was not bright. He had suffered much from his side, and the suffering had left him in a state of extreme nervous irritability.

*Shelley to Claire Clairmont.*

Pisa, October 29, 1820.

MY DEAREST CLAIRE,

I wrote to you a kind of a scrawl the other day merely to show that I had not forgotten you, and as it was taxed with a postscript by Mary it contained nothing that I wished it to contain. Mrs. Mason has just given me your letter brought by the Tantinis. I called on the Tantinis last night,\* and am pained to find that they confirm the intelligence of your letter. They tell me you looked very melancholy and disconsolate, which they imputed to the weather; you must indeed be very uncomfortable for it to become visible to them. Keep up your spirits, my best girl, until we meet at Pisa. But for Mrs. Mason, I should say come back immediately and give up a plan so inconsistent with your feelings; as it is, I fear you had better endure at least until you come here. You know, however, whatever you shall determine on, where to find one ever affectionate friend, to whom your absence is too painful for your return ever to be unwelcome. As to introductions, believe me I will try my

\* On October 28 Shelley had come to Pisa to engage lodgings.



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best. I have seen little lately of Mrs. M[ason], nor when one sees her is it easy to nail her attention to what you wish to say, unless you make a direct demand, which in the present case I can hardly do. Medwin's friends are yet to come. I feel almost certain on their arrival of being able to get introductions of some sort or other for you from him. I have not yet spoken to him of it, but I know that he would do all in his power.

I have suffered within this last week a violent access of my disease, with a return of those spasms that I used to have. I am consoled by the persuasion that the seat of the disease is in the kidneys, and consequently not mortal; \* as to the pain, I care little for it, but the nervous irritability which it leaves is a great and serious evil to me, and which, if not incessantly combated by myself and soothed by others, would leave me nothing but torment in life. I am now much better. Medwin's cheerful conversation is of some use to me, but what would it be to your sweet consolations, my own Claire? . . . †

I have read or written nothing lately, having been much occupied by my sufferings, and by Medwin, who relates wonderful and interesting things of the interior of India. We have also been talking of a plan to be accomplished with a friend of his, a man of large fortune, who will be at Leghorn next spring, and who designs to visit Greece, Syria, and Egypt in his own ship. This man has conceived a great admiration for my verses, and wishes above all things that I could be induced to join his expedition. How far all this is practicable, considering the state of my finances, I know not yet. I know that if it were it would give me the greatest pleasure, and the pleasure might be either doubled or divided by your presence or absence. All this will be explained and determined in time; meanwhile lay to your heart what I say. . . .

I am going to study Arabic—for a purpose and a motive, as you may conceive. I wish you would inquire for me at Florence whether there is an Arabic grammar and dictionary, and any other Arabic books, either printed or manuscript, to be bought. You can ask Doctor Bojti, and if he knows nothing, go to Molini's

\* Such was Vacca's opinion as to the nature of Shelley's malady at first; but Trelawny says that after Shelley's death Vacca stated that the disease was not nephritic.

† The passage omitted describes the lodgings, and has been already quoted.

library and inquire of him. At all events go to Molini's, and send me all the information you can pick up. I trust this to your kind love. If I buy and pay for any, I can send you scudi at the same time which I have made some ineffectual efforts to convey to Florence. Pardon me, my dear, for mentioning scudi, and do not love me less because they are a portion of the inevitable dross of life which clings to our friendship.

Your most affectionate

SHELLEY.\*

Claire's trial-month as governess to Professor Bojti's children passed unhappily. Shelley advised that she should return to Pisa at the expiration of the month, but that she should be careful in leaving to give no occasion of offence. The Bojtis were, indeed, themselves coming to Pisa; but if she waited to accompany them the month would have expired, and according to her agreement she would be bound to three additional months of servitude. Better, therefore, leave suddenly, and trust to the prospect opened by Mrs. Mason's promise of an introduction for Claire to the Princess Montemellitto.

"I would advise," Shelley writes, "contriving by some form of words to part with your hosts on the best possible terms, and with a mutual understanding that the connection was to be renewed again so soon as you had fulfilled the object of your leaving them—leave some sort of opening, but just so small as that they should not be able without further communication to hold you liable on the 20th for three additional months." "Read this letter over twice or three times," Shelley adds, "before you decide to act, and completely understand what you are about. . . . Let me repeat it again—do not part

\* A few days after receiving this letter, Claire amused herself with imagining a series of designs in caricature of Byron and of Shelley. They are described in her journal. Those intended for Byron are bitter in feeling and revolting in conception. Those which caricature "poor Shelley" are not unkindly meant; one satirizes his anti-Christian zeal; the other represents him requesting that he should be damned with Plato and Lord Bacon rather than saved with Paley and Malthus.

CHAP. IX. on bad or indifferent terms with the Bojtis. All depends on Jan.-May, 1821. that; and it is so easy to say that some one is ill, if you think it necessary to make any express explanation.

"It rains incessantly, but the climate is exceedingly mild, and we have no fires. . . . You must take care of yourself this winter, and eat nourishing food. How I long to see you again, and take what care I can of you; but do not imagine that if I did not most seriously think it best for you that I would advise you to return. I have suffered horribly from my side, but my general health decidedly improves, and there is now no doubt but that it is a disease of the kidneys, which, however it sometimes makes life intolerable, has, Vaccà assures me, no tendency to endanger it. May it be prolonged, that I may be the source of whatever consolation or happiness you are capable of receiving.

"Mary is well, and the babe brilliantly well and very good; he scarcely suffers at all from his teeth.

"Medwin is very agreeable. I do not know him well enough to say that he is amiable. He plays at chess, and falls into our habits of reading in the evening; and Mary likes him well enough. Henry Reveley has been frequently at Pisa, and always dines with us, in spite of a conversation I had with him, and which was intended to put an end to all intercourse between me and that base family. I have not the heart to put my interdict in effect upon Henry; he is so very miserable, and such a whipped and trembling dog." \*

On November 21. Claire was back in Pisa. The house on the Lung' Arno in the winter days was not altogether cheerful, for Medwin fell seriously ill.† "Shelley," he writes, "tended me like a brother. He applied my leeches, administered my medicines, and during six weeks that I was confined to my

\* This letter, dated "Casa Galetti, Pisa, November ( ) [*sic*] Wednesday," was written, almost certainly, on November 15, and probably preceded in date the friendly letter to Mr. Gisborne, quoted on p. 349.

† I cannot with certainty date Medwin's six weeks' illness. In the middle of January he was up and about. He left Pisa on February 27, 1821.

room was assiduous and unintermitting in his affectionate care of me." Yet in the days between Claire's arrival and the close of the year new and memorable acquaintances were made by Shelley and Mary. An extract from Mary's journal will serve to introduce their names as they first appear in connection with the story of Shelley's life.

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*Mary's Journal.*

"*Thursday, November 23.*—Write. Read Greek and Spanish. M[edwin] ill. On Monday, walk. Play at chess.

"*Friday, November 24.*—Read Greek; Villani; and Spanish with M[edwin]. Bill against the Queen thrown out in the Lords. A rainy and cloudy day.

"*Friday, December 1.*—Read Greek, 'Don Quixote,' Calderon, and Villani. Pacchiani comes in the evening. Visit La Viviani. Walk. Sgricci is introduced. Go to a funzione on the death of a student.

"*Saturday, December 2.*—Write an Italian letter to Hunt. Read 'Œdipus,' 'Don Quixote,' and Calderon. Pacchiani and a Greek Prince call — Prince Mavrocordato. Delightful weather.

"*Sunday, December 3.*—Read Greek, Calderon, and 'Don Quixote.' Visit Emilia. Mr. Taaffè in the evening. A cloudy day.

"*Tuesday, December 5.*—Ride to Ponte Serchio. Read Greek. Sgricci in the evening. Cloudy, but mild.

"*Thursday, December 7.*—Read Greek. Call on the Princess Argiropoli. Sgricci dines with us. Foggi calls in the evening.

"*Saturday, December 9.*—Read Greek, and Spanish with Emilia Viviani in the evening.

"*Monday, December 11.*—Read Greek, Spanish, and Calderon. Pacchiani in the evening.

"*Tuesday, December 12.*—Read Greek. Copy the 'Witch of Atlas.' Sgricci in the evening.

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"*Friday, December 15.*—Read Villani. Call on Mr. Mason. Rain ever since Monday. It holds up this morning, but begins again at sunset. Read 'Magnet.' Mr. Taaffe in the evening.

"*Tuesday, December 19.*—Read Greek. Copy for Shelley. Read Villani. Call on Emilia Viviani. Mr. Mason, Mr. Taaffe, and Pacchiani call. Beautiful day.

"*Wednesday, December 20.*—Read Greek. Call on the Princess Argiropoli and Emilia. Prince Mavrocordato calls, and Pacchiani. Go to the theatre and hear the Improvise of Sgricci—a most wonderful and delightful exhibition. He poured forth a torrent of poetry clothed in the most beautiful language.

"*Friday, December 22.*—Read Greek. Walk. Call on Mrs. Mason. Mavrocordato before tea; and after, Pacchiani and Sgricci. Shelley very unwell. Winter begun to-day."

Pacchiani, Emilia Viviani, Mavrocordato, the Princess Argiropoli, the *improvvisatore* Sgricci, Taaffe—to the solitary dwellers at the Casa Galetti, acquaintances seemed not to rain but to pour.

It was "il Professore" who brought about the introductions. Francesco Pacchiani, known in Pisa as "il diavolo Pacchiani," a man of forty-eight years old, distinguished as a chemist, was, or had lately been, a professor of physics at the University.\* As a young man, his experiments with the galvanic pile had filled him with hope that he had discovered a new method of producing muriatic acid; but the event did not confirm his expectations. Although still received in good society, Pacchiani had fallen in fortune and in repute. He was in orders,

\* Medwin describes Pacchiani as a Professor of Belles Lettres, and says that he delivered only one lecture in the many years during which he touched his poor emoluments. Unless he held two professorships, or there were two Pacchianis, Medwin must be in error. He certainly taught in January, 1821, for Mrs. Shelley tells how he had to hurry back from Lucca to Pisa to give a lesson. Emilia Viviani told Mary Shelley of the discovery of the professor in some obscure hole at Leghorn by the police, who sought him because he was receiving a professor's salary and neglecting his duty of lecturing.

but his religion was that of "Epicurus owne sone;" the priest's cap which he wore he named his "Tartuffeometro," or measure for hypocrisy. Stories were current relating how he kept the unlucky youth, Esop, as servant, private secretary, and what not, in order to appropriate to his own use the earnings obtained by Esop as a teacher recommended to aspirant students by the professor. He could with scientific authority enhance the price of a box of minerals on which an English collector had set his heart; or discover for a picture-fancier some mysterious Marchese ready to part with a Carlo Dolci.\* He boasted of his innumerable host of great acquaintances. "He would make one believe," writes Mary, "that he attracts the great as a milk-pail does flies on a summer morning." "Pacchiani is no great favourite of ours," she writes again. "He disgusted Shelley by telling a dirty story." The professor, by whom Shelley was introduced to Emilia Viviani, is pictured by Medwin as "somewhat above the common height, with a figure bony and angular, and covered with no more superfluous flesh than a prize-fighter. His face was dark as that of a Moor, his features marked and regular, his eyes black and gloomy." "He always reminded me," Medwin adds, "of one of Titian's portraits (his family had been Venetians) stepping out of its frame." Pacchiani's learning was considerable; his conversation sparkling and full of repartee. Shelley at first, says Medwin, "listened with rapt attention to his eloquence, which he compared to that of Coleridge." But if "il diavolo" was ever welcome at Casa Galetti, it can have been only for a very brief period. Even the devil, however, writes Mary, has his use, for it was Pacchiani who led to her acquaintance with Prince Mavrocordato.†

Alexander Mavrocordato, soon to become distinguished as the foremost statesman of the Greek Revolution, was two

\* Medwin's "Life of Shelley," vol. ii. p. 59.

† I am content to write "Mavrocordato" instead of the Greek form "Mavrocordatos," inasmuch as I find the prince signing his name thus in letters to Mary Shelley.

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\* "Memoirs of the Affairs of Greece," by Julius Millingen, pp. 65, 66.

the "Agamemnon" with an accent and pronunciation which CHAP. IX. Mavrocordato contended, were essential to the beauty of the Jan.-May, 1821. verse, and which Shelley's ear could not endure; or he and his turbaned friend faced each other in mimic war at the chess-board; or Mary, who had earnestly studied Greek for some months past, became the prince's pupil in the "Antigone," and in turn his instructor in English. "Prince Mauro is a man much to my taste," Mary tells Claire (January 21, 1821); "gentlemanly, gay, learned, and full of talent and enthusiasm for Greece. He gave me a Greek lesson, and stayed until eight o'clock." "Do you not envy my luck," she wrote to Mrs. Gisborne (February, 1821), "that, having begun Greek, an amiable, young, agreeable, and learned Greek prince comes every morning to give me a lesson of an hour and a half?" And later, "I have finished the two 'Œdipi' with my Greek, and am now half-way through the 'Antigone.' He is also my pupil in English, though not very regular. He is exceedingly clever, as you will judge when I tell you that he has learned English only four months; he can read any prose, poetry with very little help, and writes it very tolerably, and indeed he could do all this two months ago.

If the Greek prince was the chief heroic or romantic figure in Shelley's Pisan circle, its comic or burlesque element was supplied by the Irishman, Count Taaffe.\* The butt afterwards of Lord Byron's wit, Taaffe looked upon himself as poet laureate of Pisa, and as a learned critic of Italian literature. Why should he send flowers to a young lady on her natal day, he inquired in verse, when a thousand blossoms were shed from her eyes?

"Eyes that shed a thousand flowers!

Why should flowers be sent to you?

Sweetest flowers of heavenly bowers,

Love and Friendship, are what are due."

\* I find him called Count Taaffe, but I cannot say for certain that he had a right to the title. The privately printed history of the Taaffe family does not come down as far as Shelley's friend.



CHAP. IX. His "Elegy on a Saxon Princess" began impressively with Jan.-May, 1821. the words "Woe, woe!" but Taaffe, uneasy lest the invocation of sorrow should sound like a carter's address to his horse, added a third "woe," at the expense, it is to be feared, of the metre. A line of the Count's translation of Dante, which charmed his friends, is preserved in Medwin's "Conversations of Lord Byron," and is copied by Shelley in the postscript of a letter for Claire's amusement:—

"I Mantuan, capering, squalid, squalling." \*

"I have advised him," Byron said, "to frontispiece his book with his own head, *Capo di Traditore*, the head of a traitor; then will come the title-page comment—'Hell.'" But Taaffe, in spite of his verse, which, Byron supposed, might be "very good Irish," seemed "really a good fellow;" † and his notes on the "Divine Comedy" were not unworthy of publication. In June, 1821, Shelley wrote to Ollier, sending a specimen of Taaffe's translation and commentary, which had been printed at Pisa from the types of Didot, and begging that he would arrange with the author for its publication in England. "The more considerable portion of this work," wrote Shelley, "will consist of the 'Comment.' I have read with much attention this portion, as well as the verses up to the end of the eighth canto; and I do not hesitate to assure you that the lights which the annotator's labours have thrown on the obscurer parts of the text are such as all foreigners and most Italians would derive an immense additional knowledge of Dante from. They elucidate a great number of the most interesting facts connected with Dante's history and the history of his times, and everywhere bear the mark of a most elegant and accomplished mind. I know that you will not take my opinion on poetry, because I thought my own verses

\* Perhaps this was a jest made up at Taaffe's expense. Taaffe's translation was in octosyllabic *terza rima*. A criticism of his "Comment," with specimens of his translation, will be found in the *Monthly Review*, vol. cii.

† Byron to Moore: Pisa, November 16, 1821.

very good, and *you* find that the public declare them to be CHAP. IX. unreadable. Show them to Mr. Procter, who is far better Jan.-May, 1821. qualified to judge than I am; there are certainly passages of great strength and conciseness; indeed, the author has sacrificed everything to represent his original truly in this latter point. Pray observe the great beauty of the typography; they are the same types as my 'Elegy on Keats' is printed from."\* It was Murray, not Ollier, who put his name on the title-page of the first volume of Taaffe's "Comment on the Divine Comedy." The public did not encourage the annotator to produce a second volume.

Medwin held himself well qualified to smile at Taaffe's literary absurdities; and when Shelley was engaged in reading Dante or the "Autos" of Calderon with his invalid cousin, or translated for him (as he is said to have done for Byron at Geneva) the "Prometheus" of Æschylus, Medwin imagined that two intellectual and cultivated persons were receiving equal delight in each other's society. But Shelley's amiability of manner deceived his cousin. Very soon it was discovered by Shelley and Mary that Tom, with his vanity of authorship, his petty personal gossip, and his small-talk of literature, was an unmitigated bore. "You have no idea," Mary wrote to Claire in the middle of January (1821), "how earnestly we desire the transfer of Medwin to Florence. In plain Italian, he is a *seccatura*.† He sits with us, and be one reading or writing, he insists upon interrupting one every moment to read all the fine things he either writes or reads. Besides writing poetry, he translates. He intends, he says, to translate all the fine passages of Dante, and has already the canto concerning Ugolino. Now, not to say that he fills his verses with all possible commonplaces, he understands his author very imperfectly, and when he cannot make sense of the words that

\* June 16, 1821. This letter is referred to in another to Ollier of 1821.

† If the reader desire an explanation of the plain Italian, Medwin himself will supply it. "The term *seccatura*, or drying-up of all our faculties, mental and bodily" ("Life of Shelley," vol. ii. p. 54).

CHAP. IX. are, he puts in words of his own, and calls it a misprint; so sometimes falsifying the historical fact, always the sense, he produces something as like Dante as a rotten crab-apple is like a fine nonpareil. For instance, those lines of Dante—but I have not time or paper for examples.” If his departure be delayed, Mary adds, Shelley will do nothing “but conjugate the verb *seccare*, and twist and turn *seccatura* in all possible ways.” A little later the arrival of new friends helped from the shoulders of Shelley and Mary “the burden of Tom, which was beginning to be very heavy.”

Jan.-May,  
1821.

The improvisations of Sgricci, which Shelley and Mary heard in the theatre at Pisa on December 21, were a canzone upon Pyramus and Thisbe, and a tragedy founded on the story of Iphigenia in Tauris. Claire was also present. “Wonderfully fine,” she writes in her journal. “It seemed not the work of a human mind, but as if he were the instrument played upon by the superhuman inspiration of a god; the impression was so strong and fresh, a feature which belongs peculiarly to the art of the improvisatore. Of Iphigenia in grief he said, ‘Her clear forehead appears like *a star in the morning mist*.’” \* The art or knack of improvisation had long been cultivated in Italy, and had been recently extended from lyrical to dramatic poetry. On February 8, Claire, then at Florence, went to hear Madame Mazzli improvise, “which she did upon liberty, love, Agrippina returning with the ashes of Germanicus, whether love was aristocratical or democratical, a scene between Helen and Hecuba, and a canzone of the matron of Ephesus.” But among those who professed the art at this date, by far the most distinguished and celebrated was Sgricci. In 1816, Sgricci, then about twenty-three years of age, had Byron among those who listened to him in the Scala Theatre at Milan. Members of the audience having each

\* Medwin says that Shelley heard the “Iphigenia” at Lucca. He may have chanced to hear it twice, but probably Medwin errs. “I remember,” he writes, “Shelley’s admiring greatly his comparing Orestes to one high column, all that remained for the support of a house.”

inscribed a subject for poetry on a slip of paper, all the slips CHAP. IX. were thrown into a vase, from which a boy drew one paper at Jan.-May, 1821. random, and the subject was announced. Amid shouts of applause the improvisatore entered, fantastically dressed, his neck bare, and his long black hair flowing wildly over face and shoulders. Presently, seized by the fury of the god, and with many gesticulations, he poured forth his unpremeditated verse, in which rhymes in "ente" and "etto" were wont to abound. If the subject proposed were obviously unsuited for dramatic treatment—not "tragediabile"—it was rejected. Byron and Hobbhouse did not think highly of the performance at Milan. "There is a great deal of knack in these gentry," said Byron afterwards, as reported by Medwin; "their poetry is more mechanical than you suppose." Yet he acknowledged the genius of the young improvisatore from Arezzo. Shelley's admiration for Sgricci was yielded with more generosity—perhaps with less discretion; and the wonder and delight of Mary were, for a time at least, unqualified by any critical scepticism. The performance at Lucca on January 12, from which Shelley was detained by the discomfort of a swelled face, appeared to Mary "a miracle." The improvisatore's tragic theme on that occasion was the story of Inez de Castro. A few days later, at an "accademia" held at Pisa, January 23, the impromptu tragedy was "The death of Hector." "Sgricci," writes Mary Shelley, "was in excellent *inspiration*; his poetry was brilliant, flowing, and divine. A hymn to Mars, and another to Victory, were wonderfully spirited and striking. Achilles foretold to Hector that he (Achilles) was the master-spirit who would destroy and vanquish him. Victory, he said, sits on the pommel of my sword, and the way is short from thence to the point.\* The madness of Cassandra was exquisitely delineated, and her prophecies wondrous and torrent-

\* Shelley writes across Mary's letter the Italian of this passage—probably the words of Sgricci. A criticism in Italian of this tragedy of "Ettore," was written by Shelley in one of his note-books.

CHAP. IX. like; they burst on the ear like the 'Cry, Trojans, cry!' of Jan.-May, Shakespeare, and music, eloquence, and poetry combined in 1821. the wonderful effect of the imagination, or rather, shall I say, of the inspiration of some wondrous deity." A *tête-à-tête* of two hours with the inspired poet confirmed Mary's favourable opinion. "I was extremely pleased with him," she writes; "he talked with delight of the inspiration he had experienced the night before, which bore him out of himself and filled him, as they describe the Pythoness to have been filled, with divine and tumultuous emotions. Especially in the part where Cassandra prophesies, he was as overcome as she could be, and he poured forth prophecy as if Apollo had also touched his lips with the oracular touch. He talked about many things, as you may guess, in that time, with a frankness and gentleness beyond what I have before seen in him, and which was the best, and a conclusive, answer to what has been said of his irregular life." It has been conjectured by Mr. Garnett that Shelley's blank-verse poem "Orpheus" is the outcome of an attempt at improvisation suggested to him by the performances of Sgricci.\*

Rosini, a professor at the University of Pisa, a man of wide learning and a poet, shared the opinion of Byron's friends of the romantic school that the homage paid to Sgricci was the apotheosis of mediocrity. In December, 1820, he lent his authority to an attempt made to check the tide of popular applause which flowed and foamed around the improvisatore. It is probable that Rosini was on the side of good sense; but to Sgricci's admirers he appeared to be the ringleader of a gang of the dull and jealous foes of genius. Rosini's name does not appear in Mary's journal as that of a visitor at Casa

\* Sgricci died at Florence in August, 1836. I have made use of Mr. Forman's article, "The Improvisatore Sgricci in Relation to Shelley" (*Gentleman's Magazine*, January, 1880); Lord Broughton's notice of Sgricci in his "Italy," vol. i. pp. 42-50, and other sources. In the *Literary Gazette* (1819), vol. i., occur several notices of Sgricci, pp. 133, 134, 149, 278. It appears from one of these that the predictions of Cassandra, which so surprised Mrs. Shelley, were prophecies probably repeated oft in canzone or tragedy.

Galetti or Casa Aulla, and we may regard with some doubt the statement of Medwin that, although no intimacy subsisted between them, he was an occasional guest at Shelley's house. CHAP. IX.  
Jan.-May,  
1821.

The devil has his use, wrote Mary Shelley, and she exemplified the truth of her statement by pointing to the fact that Pacchiani had introduced her to Prince Mavrocordato. The devil of Pisa must be forgiven his many sins by all who love English poetry, since to him we indirectly owe the 'Epipsychidion.'\* Il Professore, we are informed by Medwin, was friend and confessor to the noble family of Viviani, one of the most ancient houses of Pisa; friend and confessor and tutor, for he had instructed Count Viviani's two daughters in languages and polite literature. The count had given his grown-up girls a stepmother not much older than either of them. Emilia and her sister were beautiful, and their mother, whose manners and morals were those of her countrywomen and her time, feared that they might become dangerous rivals in the eyes of her attendant *cavaliere*.† Through her influence they were sent from home, and were placed each in a separate convent under pretence of completing their education. Teresa Emilia, the eldest, had now been confined for two years in the Convent of St. Anna. Her father desired to see her married, but sought a husband for her who would take her off his hands without a dowry. Pacchiani spoke enthusiastically of the beauty and accomplishments of the lovely girl. "Poverina, she pines like a bird in a cage—ardently longs to escape from her prison-house. She was made for love. A miserable place is that Convent of St. Anna; and if you had seen, as I have done, the poor pensionnaires shut up in that narrow suffocating street in the summer, and in the winter, as now, shivering with cold, being allowed nothing to warm them but a few ashes, which they carry about in an earthen vase, you would

\* In what immediately follows I retain, as far as convenient, Medwin's words, while reducing the scale of his narrative.

† Medwin's statement is confirmed by a passage in Mrs. Shelley's novel, "Lodore," vol. ii. p. 174.

CHAP. IX. pity them." It is not surprising that Shelley's fancy was fired at thought of the beautiful victim of oppression.

Jan.-May,  
1821.

The earliest mention of the contessina in the journals of 1820 occurs in that of Claire. "*November 29.*—Go with Mary to a funzione in the Church of San Niccolo. Pacchiani, Fudge [Claire's jesting name for a certain Foggi], and Campbells. Then with Pacchiani to the Convent of St. Anna. The beautiful Teresa Viviani." Next day she again visited Emilia, and on December 1 Mary accompanied her to the convent. From that date visits and letters became frequent. On what day of December Shelley, in company with Medwin and Pacchiani, first saw the captive girl in the convent *parloir*, we cannot precisely say. The Convent of St. Anna, a ruinous building, was situated in an unfrequented street in the suburbs. "After passing through a gloomy portal that led to a quadrangle, the area of which was crowded with crosses, memorials of old monastic times," writes Medwin, "we were soon in the presence of Emilia. . . . Emilia was indeed lovely and interesting. Her profuse black hair, tied in the most simple knot, after the manner of a Greek Muse in the Florence Gallery, displayed to its full height her brow, fair as that of the marble of which I speak. She was also of about the same height as the antique. Her features possessed a rare faultlessness, and almost Grecian contour, the nose and forehead making a straight line. . . . Her eyes had the sleepy voluptuousness, if not the colour, of Beatrice Cenci's. They had, indeed, no definite colour, changing with the changing feeling, to dark or light, as the soul animated them. Her cheek was pale, too, as marble, owing to her confinement and want of air, or perhaps to 'thought.'" With a prettily pathetic address of Emilia to a caged lark in the convent parlour, Medwin's account of the interview ends.

Medwin's description of Emilia agrees in many particulars with that of Mrs. Shelley in her novel "*Lodore*," in which the story of the contessina is adapted to the purposes of fiction;

but Mrs. Shelley adds some less attractive features. "Certainly CHAP. IX.  
 she was entirely Italian, but she was very beautiful; her complexion was delicate, though dark and without much colour. Jan.-May, 1821.  
 Her hair silken and glossy as the raven's wing; her large bright black eyes resplendent; the perfect arch of her brows, and the marmoreal and harmonious grace of her forehead, such as is never seen in northern lands, except in sculpture imitated from the Greeks. The lower part of her face was not so good; her smile was deficient in sweetness, her voice wanted melody, and sounded loud to an English ear. Her gestures were expressive, but quick and wanting in grace. She was more agreeable when silent, and could be regarded as a picture, than when called into action. She was complimentary in her conversation, and her manners were winning by their frankness and ease. She gesticulated too much, and her features were too much in motion,—too pantomimely expressive, so to speak, not to impress disagreeably one accustomed to the composure of the English. Still she was a beautiful creature; young, artless, desirous to please, and endowed moreover with the vivacious genius, the imaginative talent, of her country." \*

Of a sudden three persons had fallen in love with Emilia—Mary, Claire, and Shelley. In Mary's regard there was indeed a moderating good sense which to Emilia at times appeared to have a touch of coldness in it. Yet Mary's visits to the convent were frequent, and grew more frequent as the weeks went by; nor were they discontinued even when she removed in May from Pisa to the Baths of St. Giuliano. At Christmas, Mary's gift of a chain, and her invitation to the forlorn girl to come and stay with her, gave no slight pleasure to Emilia; and it was Mary who wrote to Hunt a few days after Christmas as follows: "It is grievous to see this beautiful girl wearing out the best years of her life in an odious convent,

\* The date of Mrs. Shelley's novel, in which I find this description, is 1835. Emilia here bears the name Clorinda.



CHAP. IX. where both mind and body are sick from want of the appropriate exercise for each. I think she has great talent, if not genius—  
 Jan.-May, 1821. or if not an internal fountain how could she have acquired the mastery she has of her own language, which she writes so beautifully, or those ideas which lift her so far above the rest of the Italians? She has not studied much, and now, hopeless from a five years' confinement, everything disgusts her, and she looks with hatred and distaste even on the alleviations of her situation. Her only hope is in a marriage which her parents tell her is concluded, although she has never seen the person intended for her. Nor do I think the change of situation will be much for the better; for he is a younger brother, and will live in the house with his mother, who, they say, is *molta secante*. Yet she may then have the free use of her limbs; she may then be able to walk out among the fields, vineyards, and woods of her country, and see the mountains and the sky, and not be as now, a dozen steps to the right, and then back to the left another dozen, which is the longest walk her convent garden affords; and that, you may be sure, she is very seldom tempted to take.\* Notwithstanding her imprisonment, the fair captive had had her trials and joys of the heart, and by the practice of a simple rule she had contrived to let her passion and her piety go hand in hand. She always prayed to a saint, Emilia told Claire; "and every time she changes her lover," Claire notes in the journal, "she changes her saint, adopting the one of her lover."

Claire's zeal on behalf of her new friend took the form suitable to one who had no richer gift to bestow, of an attempt to instruct Emilia in the English language; and soon the contessina and "her little Chiara" were closeted together over dictionary and grammar. Shelley and Mary sent her books—"Corinne," "La Nouvelle Héloïse"—and birds to beguile the captive hours; with letters, invitations, and costlier tokens of their regard. What higher or more chivalrous enterprise for

\* To Hunt, December 29, 1820.

Shelley could there be than to effect the enfranchisement of a CHAP. IX.  
 being so persecuted, so innocent, so beautiful, so spiritual, so Jan.-May.  
 exalted? Not many days had passed before Mrs. Shelley was 1821.  
 the "most dear sister," the "adored Mary," of Emilia's ardent  
 and effusive letters—letters still extant, written in very  
 choice Italian; while the "sensibile Percy" became her "caro  
 fratello," and even, we are told, in a refined and transcendental  
 sense, her "adorato sposo." \* Transplanted from the language  
 of the south into the hardier air of our northern speech,  
 Emilia's flowers of sentiment droop and lose their colour; and  
 even in their native dialect, after sixty years, the ardent words  
 of a lovely girl are not quite so quick and spirit-stirring as  
 when, fresh from the fancy or the heart, they lived and  
 lightened on the page.

*From Letters of Emilia Viviani.*

"[To Shelley, December 10, 1820.] My dear Brother, your  
 courteous attentions overwhelm me, for I know that in no  
 wise do I deserve them. Beside the trouble Claire takes to  
 teach me your native tongue, you give me books! O my  
 good, my dear friend! how can I prove to you my gratitude  
 and make a return for your favours? My situation prevents  
 me from doing this, notwithstanding my will, my duty, and  
 the affection which I bear you. Pity me, therefore, and be  
 assured of my eternal gratitude. Call me always, if you like,  
 your Sister, for so sweet a name is very dear to me; and I too  
 will always call you my dear Brother, and will consider you  
 as though you were such indeed. You have already seen that  
 I had anticipated you in this, which means that our hearts  
 understand each other, that they have the same sentiments,  
 and were created to be bound by a strong and constant  
 friendship. I embrace my very dear and beautiful sister  
 Mary, whose company is so agreeable to me. Adieu, *sensibile*

\* I give this on the authority of an informant of Mr. Rossetti. The phrase  
 does not occur in the letters seen by me.

CHAP. IX. Percy ; take every care of your health, and do not forget your  
 Jan.-May, most affectionate sister and friend, Teresa Emilia."  
 1821.

"[To Shelley, undated.\*] My dear Friend, I am indeed unhappy! What a fate! I suffer heavily, and am the cause of a thousand griefs to others. O God! were it not better that I should die? Then I should cease to suffer, or at least to make others suffer. Now I am the object of hatred to others and to myself. I afflict the most courteous and beloved persons. O my incomparable Friend, *angelica creatura*, did you ever suppose that I should be the cause of so much anguish to you? You see what a person you have come to know. Pardon me, my friend, pardon me!"

"[To Shelley, December 12, 1820.] My dear Brother, to show you that your familiarity does not displease, but on the contrary gratifies me, and in order that you should not take as a *rebuke* my treating you in any other way, I write to you in your own tone of confidence and sweet friendship. My Claire, if she read this, will say that she is *jealous*; but let her reflect that I do not write thus save to her good brother and to mine.

"This evening I wish to tell you many things, but my vigilant and importunate *Argus* has hindered me from so doing. I will now tell you a part of them. You console me by engaging yourself to effect my liberation. Here I fare ill both in spirits and health, and suffer very much in every way, so that by taking me from here you would give me a new existence. I leave the *how* to you, who have that wisdom and experience in which I am wanting. . . . Ah, God pardon my mother! She could make me contented if not happy, and on the contrary it is she who is the chief cause of my misfortunes. I love her still, and wish her every good. I feel that Nature speaks and lives in my heart. Although she

\* The second person is used throughout.

forgets that she is my mother, I remember that I am her CHAP. IX. daughter; but if she were to have pleasures as many as are <sup>Jan.-May, 1821.</sup> and have been the sorrows which she has brought upon me, no woman would be more fortunate than she. . . . You say that my liberation will perhaps *divide* us. O my friend! my soul, my heart, can never be parted from my brother and from my dear sisters. My person, once delivered from this prison, will attempt all things in order to follow my heart, and Emilia will seek you everywhere, even were you at the utmost boundaries of the world. I do not love, nor shall I ever be able to love any thing or person so much as your family; for it I would abandon everything, and should lose nothing, since in it are included all that can exist of beautiful, virtuous, amiable, *sensible*, and learned in the world."

"[To Mary, evening of December 24, 1820.\*] My adored Friend, although after the gift of your friendship you can offer me no other gift so precious, or more dear to me, yet I have been exceedingly pleased by the slender *chain*, which must be the symbol of that which binds and will eternally bind our hearts. Your generous ways, besides, overwhelm me, and I am much mortified not to be able to do as much towards you, that I might show you a part of the immense gratitude which lives in my heart, and tell you how much I love you. . . . Excuse my insufficiency, and be assured that I know the full *worth* of Mary. So you are not well. How sorry I am! You did right not to go out in this bad weather. I say this to you out of regard for your health, for to see you is a great pleasure to me. You seem to me a little cold sometimes, and that causes me an uncomfortable feeling; but I know that your husband said well when he said that your apparent coldness is only *the ash which covers an affectionate heart*."

"[To Shelley, Monday.] Dear Brother, how are you? You must have suffered horribly from those spasms. May

\* The second person is used throughout.

## CHAP. IX.

Jan.-May,  
1821.

Heaven grant that they have now ceased! Dear friend, you cannot think how much your lot interests me, and how sensible I am to all that befalls you! I know that you are very unhappy, and to see myself incapable of alleviating or healing your unmerited ills is for me the greatest of all pains. . . . But God, dear brother, is good and omnipotent. If He has delayed the justice and recompense which are your due, it is not, I hope, that He has forgotten it. And the day will come, if He is just, which will compensate you for the horrible pains which torture you so undeservedly. Farewell, my good, my innocent friend."

"[To Mary, Tuesday.] My dearest Sister, I send you back 'Corinne' with my liveliest thanks. It is a beautiful story, though sad, and such as to make a soul sensitive and *passionée* like mine shed tears. Unhappy Corinne! but how many unhappy ones there are whose lot is the same as thine! . . . Farewell, dear; sympathize with my deep sadness, which in spite of me will show itself every moment. Pray with my brother to the Supreme Being for me. You both, whose divine souls are so like Him who created them, beg Him to change my destiny or to take from me this very heavy life. Hide this sad letter from my friend. But salute him tenderly for me."

"[To Mary, undated.] How glad I was to get your affectionate letter! How much your good thoughts pleased me, adorned by your poetical ideas! You have much talent, my Mary, which, together with your virtue and your excellent heart, makes you one of the loveliest of God's or Nature's creatures. . . . Give my tenderest salutations to your dear husband and my good brother. Yesterday night Claire narrated to me part of his history. His many misfortunes, his unjust persecutions, and his firm and innate virtue in the midst of these terrible and unmerited sorrows, filled my heart with admiration and affection, and made me think, and per-

haps not untruly, that he is not a human creature; he has CHAP IX. only a human exterior, but the interior is all divine. The <sup>Jan.-May. 1821.</sup> Being of all beings has doubtless sent him to earth to accredit virtue and to give an exact image of Himself."

"[To Shelley, undated.] You say well; in *friendship* everything must be in common; few, indeed, very few, are the persons who know this sublime and sweet Divinity; but we know it, and that is enough. . . . My Claire's departure afflicts me excessively, as the mere thought afflicts me. I love her so much. I hope for the rest that you both will not abandon me, and that the beautiful Mary, so dear to me, and you will come to see me, and will bring me letters from my dear friend [Claire]. Mary does not write to me. Is it possible that she loves me less than the others do? I should be very much pained by that. I wish to flatter myself that it is only her son and her occupations which cause this. Is not this the case?"

"[To Shelley, Saturday morning.] My dear Shelley, I beg you to come no more to St. Anna, yourself or any of your family. My parents desire that I should henceforth see no one. Every attempt would be in vain; we should be humiliated without obtaining anything. The Signora Eusta acts in concert with them. She treated me yesterday in a most insolent manner, and uttered an impertinence to me which not even a servant-maid would have endured. . . . Console yourself meanwhile, and do not afflict yourself on account of such proceedings. Consider that in a few days I shall be delivered from this odious prison, and then I shall be permitted to enjoy your amiable and virtuous society. This hope sweetens my misfortunes. . . . Courage! I must drink to the last drop the bitter cup of sorrows."

Troppo!—"too much"—is the closing word of one of Emilia's epistles; and the reader may be inclined to echo the

CHAP. IX. exclamation. But Shelley did not find the letters too frequent  
 Jan.-May, or too long. An inexhaustible fund of the power of idealizing  
 1821. lay within him. Womanhood—above all, womanhood chained and panting for liberty—appealed with peculiar force to the idealizing chivalry of his imagination. Mary, after years of closest union, had become a good portion of his own life; she was Mary Shelley, daughter of William Godwin, known in all her strong points and weak points of character; a very definite, concrete being. Emilia, scarcely known to him at all, whose life was not intertwined and intertwined with his own life—Emilia, beautiful, spiritual, sorrowing, became for him a type and symbol of what Goethe names “the eternal feminine,” a type and symbol of all that is most radiant and divine in nature, all that is most remote and unattainable, yet ever to be pursued—the ideal of beauty, truth, and love. She was at once a living and breathing woman, young, lovely, ardent, afflicted, and the avatar of the Ideal. Such illusions may be of service in keeping alive within us the aspiration for the highest things, but assuredly they have a dangerous tendency to draw away from ordinary events and from real persons some of those founts of feeling which are needed to keep fresh and bright the common ways and days of our life.

Emilia, the prose of whose letters sometimes becomes a kind of spurious poetry, could also write in verse. Some lines from “The Portrait of Tirsi —” are of interest, not indeed as a veritable picture of Shelley, but as the handiwork of the inspirer of “Epipsychidion.”

#### IL RITRATTO DE TIRSI —.

Mentre stavami assisa in colle aprico,  
 Al grato mormorio di chiaro fonte,  
 A cui l' Arbor di Pace ombra facea,  
 E che nell' onda, e fra 'l mio crin, contento  
 Scherzando errava un Zeffiro lascivo,  
 Di vago aspetto un Garzoncel vid' io—  
 Miste di rose, e di gigli avea le gote,

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E tinta d' oro l' ondeggianti chiorna,  
 Ove Cupido sue quadrella ascose;  
 Cilestri i lumi in bel modo volgea,  
 Folgoreggianti di divino fuoco,  
 E l' infallibil sguardo i cor rapiva.  
 L' alma in essi sedeva: un' alma, oh Dio!  
 Che di rado al mortal concede il cielo.  
 Apollo lo credei, nè in altra forma  
 Discese, al certo, in terra, allorchè il gregge  
 Del Tessalo Signor guidava al pasco,  
 Temprando il suo dolor con dolci note;  
 Nè in altra forma può pingersi Apollo.—  
 Grande era, e svelto, e tal di Delfo è il Dio.  
 Dotto fu il Nume, ed il garzon sagace,  
 D' eleganza, e saper è il ver modello:  
 E l' arte d' Esculapio alfin onora.—  
 Ma forse Apollo sì vago non era;  
 Che sè tal fosse stato, oh! non saria  
 Da lui fuggita di Penèo la figlia;  
 O il cor stato saria piu dur che selce;  
 Che tal non dassi in femminile spoglia,  
 Ma, al sol mirarlo, vinta, intenerita,  
 E ad interno tremor scossa ogni fibra,  
 Nè voce articular, nè volger passo  
 Avria potuto, e in braccio a lui sarebbe.

We need not pursue the parallel, which follows, between Tirsi and Narcissus.\* “Call on Emilia Viviani,” Mary writes in her journal of January 31. “Shelley reads the ‘Vita Nuova’ aloud to me in the evening.” “February 2.—Read Greek. Write. Emilia Viviani walks out with Shelley in the evening.” Probably during these days Shelley was engaged on that wonderful poem, the “Epipsychidion,” which he himself compares, with respect to its translation of the actual into the ideal, to the “Vita Nuova” of Dante.† In the note prefixed to the poem, the supposed writer is said to have

\* Medwin has printed a prose composition of Emilia's, entitled “Il Vero Amore” (“Life of Shelley,” vol. ii. pp. 67-69).

† Trelawny asserted that the “Epipsychidion” was first written by Shelley in Italian.



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died at Florence as he was preparing for a voyage to one of the wildest of the Sporades, where it was his hope to realize a scheme of life hardly suited perhaps for this low earth. Shelley desired to detach the passion and imagery of the poem from his veritable historical self; and this perhaps all the more because it is indeed a fragment of a confession, and an ideal history of his own feelings. Its higher and more abiding meanings, he felt, would live and act more purely and freely if they gained a certain generalization or abstraction, and were not complicated with personal and temporary details; yet at the same time, like the "Vita Nuova" or Shakespeare's "Sonnets," his "Epipsychidion" was to possess the fascination of an enigma whose beauty subdues and stimulates and again subdues all mere curiosity. On February 16, the "Ode to Naples," a sonnet, and the "Epipsychidion" were sent to the publisher, Ollier. "The longer poem," wrote Shelley, "I desire should not be considered as my own; indeed, in a certain sense, it is a production of a portion of me already dead; and in this sense the advertisement is no fiction. It is to be published simply for the esoteric few; and I make its author a secret, to avoid the malignity of those who turn sweet food into poison, transforming all they touch into the corruption of their own natures. My wish with respect to it is, that it should be printed immediately in the simplest form, and merely one hundred copies; those who are capable of judging and feeling rightly with respect to a composition of so abstruse a nature certainly do not arrive at that number—among those at least who would ever be excited to read an obscure and anonymous production; and it would give me no pleasure that the vulgar should read it." A spirit-winged song, soaring swift and high, the "Epipsychidion" was at first hardly noted by any eye in its flight across the heavens, and its cry which descended to earth, though keen and vibrating, hardly pierced the ear of the wayfarers of the world. In October, Shelley wrote to Mr. Gisborne, "The

‘Epipsychidion’ is a mystery ; as to ‘real flesh and blood, you CHAP. IX.  
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1821. know that I do not deal in those articles ; you might as well go to a gin-shop for a leg of mutton, as expect anything human or earthly from me. I desired Ollier not to circulate this piece except to the *συμεροί*, and even they, it seems, are inclined to approximate me to the circle of a servant-girl and her sweetheart. But I intend to write a symposium of my own to set all this right.” Yet the “Epipsychidion” had as the starting-point of its advance into the ideal Emilia Viviani, a mortal maiden—“the only Italian,” said Shelley to Peacock, “for whom I ever felt any interest.” And when Emilia, like Elizabeth Hitchener, in the days of boyhood, proved no other than an ordinary human creature, Shelley felt a certain humiliation in remembering how his heart had been the dupe of his imagination. “The ‘Epipsychidion,’” he wrote to Mr. Gisborne in June, 1822, “I cannot look at ; the person whom it celebrates was a cloud instead of a Juno ; and poor Ixion starts from the centaur that was the offspring of his own embrace. If you are curious, however, to hear what I am and have been, it will tell you something thereof. It is an idealized history of my life and feelings. I think one is always in love with something or other ; the error—and I confess it is not easy for spirits cased in flesh and blood to avoid it—consists in seeking in a mortal image the likeness of what is, perhaps, eternal.” With a like sense of Shelley’s unwisdom, but with less indulgence towards the error of the idealist, Mary wrote to Mrs. Gisborne (March 7, 1822), “Emilia has married Biondi ; we hear that she leads him and his mother (to use a vulgarism) a devil of a life. The conclusion of our friendship (*à la Italiana*) puts me in mind of a nursery rhyme which runs thus :—

‘ As I was going down Cranbourne Lane,  
Cranbourne Lane was dirty,  
And there I met a pretty maid  
Who dropt to me a curtsy.

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'I gave her cakes, I gave her wine,  
I gave her sugar-candy;  
But oh! the little naughty girl,  
She asked me for some brandy.'

Now turn 'Cranbourne Lane' into Pisan acquaintances, which, I am sure, are dirty enough, and 'brandy' into that wherewithal to buy brandy (and that no small sum *però*), and you have the whole story of Shelley's Italian Platonics.\* It was natural that Mary should think with impatience of Shelley's expense of spirit with so little profit, as he himself admits, to his life as a man, however it may have been with his art as a poet. The wife of a man of genius has sometimes to play a mother's part towards the eternal child, who is dear to her; if he cry for an unwholesome globe of gleaming fruit, supposing it to be the moon, he is fortunate if one be by his side with courage to undertake the disagreeable duty of offering a check or implying a reproof. To the poet there may indeed, for a time, be loss; but if the eternal child is ever to become adult and a man (yet with a child's heart still), he can bear the discipline which helps, even through pain, to mature the mind. The mother's part should, indeed, be executed with tenderness as well as truth. Mary Shelley was herself deeply interested by the lovely Italian girl, and if she came forth from the first illusion earlier than did Shelley, all the evidence goes to show that she made no harsh or sudden effort to expose his unwisdom to himself, but rather acted with kindly discretion. As for the hapless Emilia, she was seen by Medwin some years after her ill-starred wedding; as she lay on her couch and

\* The same letter contains a passage commenting on certain "predictions or anteductions" of Varley. "But to speak of predictions or anteductions, some of Varley's are curious enough—'Ill fortune in May or June, 1815.' No; it was then that he [Shelley] arranged his income; there was no ill except health, *al solito*, at that time. The particular days of the 2nd and 14th June, 1820, were not ill, but the whole period was disastrous. It was then that we were alarmed by Paolo's attack and disturbance. About a lady in the winter of last year, enough, God knows! Nothing particular about a fat bouncing lady at ten at night; and indeed things got more quiet in April."

extended a thin hand, she was so changed that the visitor CHAP. IX.  
 could hardly find a trace of her former beauty. Not long Jan.-May,  
 after this interview, poisoned by the malaria of the Maremma, 1821.  
 and broken in heart and hope, Emilia died.

Shelley's interest in Emilia was not such as to seclude him from all other interests. In *Ollier's Literary Miscellany*, 1820, appeared an essay by Peacock, entitled "The Four Ages of Poetry." Poetry, the writer maintained, has its age of iron, its age of gold, its age of silver, and its age of brass. By the demand for poetry, the supply of that commodity is regulated; some primitive king needs a bard to celebrate the strength of his arm, and offers the liquor which is to furnish the inspiration of his panegyrist—such is the origin of song. In our English poetry the silver age of authority, beginning with Dryden and ending with Gray, has been succeeded by the age of brass, "which, by rejecting the polish and the learning of the age of silver, and taking a retrograde stride to the barbarisms and crude traditions of the age of iron, professes to return to nature and revive the age of gold." Shelley read Peacock's essay, and admitted the justice of some of his strictures on contemporary writers of verse. "The world is pale," writes Shelley (February 15, 1821), "with the sickness of such stuff. At the same time," he adds, "your anathemas against poetry itself excited me to a sacred rage, or *caloëthes scribendi* \* of vindicating the insulted Muses. I had the greatest possible desire to break a lance with you, within the lists of a magazine, in honour of my mistress, Urania; but God willed that I should be too lazy, and wrested the victory from your hope: since first having unhorsed poetry, and the universal sense of the wisest in all ages, an easy conquest would have remained to you in me, the knight of the shield of shadow and the lance of gossamere." A few days later Shelley threw off his lethargy, and addressed himself to combat for the honour of his Lady Urania. "A Defence of

\* "*Caloëthes*," the opposite of "*cacoëthes*."

CHAP. IX. Poetry" was written in February and March, 1821, and was Jan.-May, 1821. despatched to England for insertion in *Ollier's Literary Miscellany* by the 21st of the latter month; but it remained unprinted until many years after Shelley's death. This, the most admirable of his prose writings, is conceived in another and a higher strain than that of Peacock's clever budget of paradoxes. Here Shelley does not write as a humble disciple of William Godwin, but straight from his own spirit. If Sidney and Spenser could have looked on from their Elysium, they would have applauded the grace and puissance of the knight of the lance of gossamere in a cause on behalf of which each of them in his day had been a champion.\* Poetry, as Shelley believed, is no commodity produced to satisfy a monarch's demand for panegyric; it is the order and beauty of the universe expressing themselves through the mind of man, and gaining from man's mind a higher and intenser life. Nor did he regard the times on which he had fallen as evil times—an age of brass; rather, he recognized in the great outburst of poetry which filled the spacious days of the opening of this century a prophecy of the awakening of a great people. "In spite of the low-thoughted envy which would undervalue contemporary merit," he wrote, "our own will be a memorable age in intellectual achievements, and we live among such philosophers and poets as surpass beyond comparison any who have appeared since the last national struggle for civil and religious liberty." "A Defence of Poetry," if completed, would have consisted of three parts, of which we possess only the first, that which treats of poetry in its elements and principles, and surveys the history of the past. The second part of the essay would have had for its object an application to contemporary poetry of the principles laid down in the first part, and would have included "a defence of the attempt to idealize the modern forms of manners and opinions, and compel them into a subordination to the imagination and creative faculty."

\* On March 11 and 12 Mary read Sidney's "Apology for Poetry."

Apart from its general interest, "A Defence of Poetry" CHAP. IX.  
 possesses much autobiographical importance as an undesigned Jan.-May.  
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 exposition of the processes of the mind of Shelley as a creator and an artist.

Just before Christmas, 1820, Claire, having first visited the convent to say her farewell to Emilia, returned, under Pacchiani's escort, to Professor Bojti's house at Florence. "I am seriously distressed," Shelley wrote to her on January 2, "to perceive by your letters the vacillating state of your health and spirits, and can only offer you the consolation of unavailing wishes. If they were as effectual as they are sincere, your ills would have a very short duration. You do me injustice in imagining that I am in any degree insensible to your pleasure or pain. I wish, since I am incapable of communicating the one or relieving the other, that I could do so.

"I see Emilia sometimes, who always talks of you and laments your absence. She continues to enchant me infinitely, and I soothe myself with the idea that I make the discomfort of her captivity lighter to her by demonstration of the interest which she has awakened in me.

"I have not been able to see for the last day or two, or I should have written to you; my eyes are still weak.\* I have suffered also considerably from my disease. . . .

"All your wishes have been attended to respecting 'Julian and Maddalo,' which never was intended for publication." †

Claire Clairmont was gone from Pisa; but new acquaintances, soon to become friends, had arrived. At the Maison aux Grenades, on the shores of the Lake of Geneva, there resided

\* Shelley suffered from an attack of ophthalmia, but for which "A Defence of Poetry" would probably have been written in January.

† The last statement contradicts Shelley's words to Hunt, August 15, 1819, begging him to give "Julian and Maddalo" to Ollier for publication. In May and November, 1820, Shelley wrote to Ollier with respect to its publication. On February 22, 1821, he writes to Ollier, "I suppose 'Julian and Maddalo' is published. If not, do not add the 'Witch of Atlas' to that peculiar piece of writing." As a fact, the poem was not published during Shelley's life. Miss Clairmont probably objected to the appearance of the passage which describes *Allegra*.

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with Medwin, in the summer of 1820, George Jervoice, of the Madras Artillery, and Edward Elliker Williams,\* a lieutenant on half-pay, late of the 8th Dragoons. Williams and his wife had moved from Geneva to Châlons-sur-Saône, and, influenced by Medwin's persuasions, thence by Marseilles and Leghorn to Pisa. It was January 13, 1821, when they landed at Leghorn, and many days did not pass before they were introduced by Medwin to Shelley and Mary. Edward Williams was younger than Shelley by a year or two.† They had been together at Eton in 1805, but had probably formed no acquaintance with each other as schoolboys, for Shelley at that date had ceased to be a Lower Boy, while Williams, during his brief residence at Eton seems not to have passed to the upper school. At a very early age Williams had entered the navy, but soon changed his mode of life. "I liked the sea," he said, "but detested the tyranny practised on board men-of-war. I left the navy, went into the dragoons, and was sent to India. My mother was a widow; a man married her for her money. Her money he would have, and he defrauded me of a large portion of my inheritance. I sold my commission, marred my prospects of rising by marrying, and drifted here."‡ Williams, although possessed of no scholastic erudition, had, like Medwin, an interest in literature, and he even aspired to write a play; but he had none of Medwin's literary vanity, and was, in freshness and brightness and simplicity of nature, all that Medwin was not. No man ever existed, says Mary Shelley, more gentle, generous, and fearless. Jane Williams had a grace and insinuating sweetness of manner which won by degrees upon all who became acquainted with her. One child—a boy—had been born to them about a year since, and the birth of a second

\* In the printed Eton School Lists, Williams's second name is spelled Elliker; elsewhere Ellerker. I follow the inscription printed in Trelawny's "Records," etc., vol. ii. p. 4.

† Williams notes in his journal, "April 22 [1822]. My birthday. Forget whether born in 1793 or 1794."

‡ Trelawny, "Records of Shelley," etc., vol. i. p. 136. Medwin says that Williams was a lineal descendant of a daughter of Oliver Cromwell.

babe was at hand. The prospect of meeting Shelley had been CHAP. IX. for Williams one of the chief attractions of Pisa, and it was Jan.-May, 1821. soon found that the gain was not to be all on one side. "I have no adventures to record or story to tell in this letter," Mary wrote to Claire on January 21, "but as you may be somewhat curious about our new friends, I will tell you the little I have observed about them. Jane is certainly very pretty, but she wants animation. . . . Ned seems the picture of good-humour and obligingness. He is lively and possesses great talent in drawing, so that with him one is never at a loss for subjects of conversation.\* He seems to make all he sees subjects of surprise or pleasure; cannot endure Miss Edgeworth's novels, and is the opposite of a prude in every respect (and *di piu* has a soft harmonious voice infinitely pleasing)." In addition to Ned's other good qualities, he had the admirable one of being able cheerfully to bear away some of "the burden of Tom."

While Shelley's social life was thus enlarging and enriching itself, if he looked abroad on the state of Italy, there was much to excite his fears for that patriotic movement which a few months since had, as Shelley imagined, such a glorious birth. In October, 1820, a congress met at Troppau, attended by the Emperors of Russia and Austria and the Crown Prince of Prussia. It was determined, chiefly through Metternich's influence, that the revolutionary movement in Naples should be suppressed. During the mid-days of February, as Claire's journal records, the Austrian troops were pouring through Florence on their way to the south. "*February 12.*—Entry of 11,000 Austrian troops into Florence. *February 14.*—To-day, 10,000 Austrian troops pass through the Roman Gate out of Florence, and 16,000 enter from Bologna by the Porta San Gallo. *February 16.*—Entry of 16,000 Austrians by Porta San Gallo." "We are now," Shelley wrote to Peacock (February 15), "in the crisis and point of expectation in Italy.

\* Mary Shelley sat to Williams for her portrait on February 6, 7, 8.



CHAP. IX. The Neapolitan and Austrian armies are rapidly approaching each other, and every day the news of a battle may be expected. The former have advanced into the ecclesiastical states, and taken hostages from Rome to assure themselves of the neutrality of that power, and appear determined to try their strength in open battle. I need not tell you how little chance there is that the new and undisciplined levies of Naples should stand against a superior force of veteran troops. But the birth of liberty in nations abounds in examples of a reversal of the ordinary laws of calculation: the defeat of the Austrians would be the signal of insurrection throughout all Italy." The King of Naples, a traitor to his people, in whose presence he had sworn to the Constitution, was with the Austrian army. The various and swift-succeeding bulletins and rumours, as they reached Florence in mid-March, are chronicled in Claire's journal. Affairs in North Italy added to the confusion of hopes and fears, for on March 16 came the news that the troops at Turin had demanded a constitution, and that Victor Emanuel had retired to Alessandria, leaving Charles Albert, Prince of Carignano, as regent. Shelley eagerly read the bulletins as they reached Pisa, hoping against hope. When, on March 23, Genoa declared itself free, he felt assured for a moment that the cause of freedom must speedily triumph. "We are surrounded here in Pisa," he wrote (March 21), "by revolutionary volcanoes, which as yet give more light than heat; the lava has not yet reached Tuscany." The immediate result could not long be doubtful; the Austrian army, if it needed support, had but to summon to its assistance a vast army from Russia. But, in fact, no assistance was needed; the constitutional forces under General P  p   melted away after the skirmish at Rieti to a few hundreds, and the perjured King of Naples, having first dedicated a magnificent lamp to "Our Lady" in gratitude for the restoration of his honour, proceeded to carry out the decrees of his Austrian masters, and to appoint criminal juntas for the mock-trial

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and execution of the insurgents. "Arrival at Florence," Claire CHAP. IX. notes in her journal (March 18), "of General Fardelli from Jan.-May, 1821. Naples, who brings an act of submission and respect from the Parliament and troops to the king. In the evening, go to the Princess Montemiletto, who exclaimed, 'Vous savez, vous savez que tout est fini!'"

Shelley's letters to Claire in the early months of 1821 kept her informed of the events at Pisa, and of some of his thoughts and feelings on public affairs.

*Shelley to Claire Clairmont.*

Tuesday evening [January 16], 1821.

MY DEAR CLAIRE,

Many thanks for your kind and tender letter which Mrs. M[ason] gave me to-day, several days after it had arrived. I had been very ill, and had not seen her for a fortnight. I had several times been going to write to you to request you to love me better than you do, when meanwhile your letter arrives.\* I shall punctually follow all such portions of the advice it contains which are practicable.

I write to-night that I may not seem to neglect you, though I have little time. I am delighted to hear of your recovered health. May I entreat you to be cautious in keeping it? Mine is far better than it has been, and the relapse which I now suffer into a state of ease from one of pain is attended with such an excessive susceptibility of nature that I suffer equally from pleasure and from pain. You will ask me naturally enough *where* I find any pleasure. The wind, the light, the air, the smell of a flower, affects me with violent emotions. There needs no catalogue of the causes of pain.

I see Emily sometimes, and whether her presence is the source of pain or pleasure to me, I am equally ill-fated in both. I am deeply interested in her destiny, and that interest can in no manner influence it. She is not, however, insensible to my sympathy, and she counts it among her alleviations. As much comfort as she receives from my attachment to her, *I lose*. There is no reason that you should fear any mixture of that which you call *love*. My conception of Emilia's talents augments every day.

\* Claire had complained that Shelley did not take an interest in her pleasure or her pain.

CHAP. IX. Her moral nature is fine, but not above circumstances; yet I think her tender and true, which is always something. How many are only one of these things at a time!

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So much for sentiment and ethics. The Williamses are come, and Mrs. W. dined here to-day—an extremely pretty and gentle woman, apparently not *very* clever. I like her very much. I have only seen her for an hour, but I will tell you more another time. Mary will write you sheets of gossip. I have not seen Mr. W. The Greek expedition appears to be broken up. No news of any kind that I know of.

You delight me with your progress in German, in spite of the reproach which accompanies the account of it. Occupy, amuse, instruct, multiply yourself and your faculties, and defy the foul fiend. I wish to Heaven, my dear girl, that *I* could be of any avail to add to your pleasure or diminish your pain—how ardently you cannot know; you only know, as you frequently take care to tell me, how vainly. I can do you no other good than in keeping up the unnatural connection between this feeble mass of disease and infirmities and the rapid and weary spirit doomed to drag it through this world [here some words are blotted out by Claire]. I took up the pen for an instant only to thank you, and, if you will, to kiss you for your kind attention to me, and I find I have written in ill spirits, which may infect you. Let them not do so. I will write again to-morrow. Meanwhile, yours most tenderly,  
S.

*Shelley to Claire Clairmont.*

Pisa, Friday [February 16, 1821].

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

I write in great haste at the banker's, not to lose the post, and send you a cheque for two months. A thousand thanks for your affectionate letter, which to me is as water in the desert. I hope to tell you of Del Rosso [the Livornese attorney] by next post; he has just sent for his money, which is paid him.

Adieu, best Claire. Yours ever,

S.

*Shelley to Claire Clairmont.*

Sunday [February 18, 1821].

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

I wrote a line only with the cheque, which I hope you have received; I had not time on that day to answer your letters.

Your predilection for Germany, German literature and manners, CHAP. IX. and for an attempt at forming some connections there, still continues. There can be no harm in making the attempt, should you succeed in finding a fit occasion for it, because you can always recede in case it should not answer your expectations. The situation of *dame de compagnie* is one indeed in which there is little to be hoped compared with what is to be feared, calculating on common cases; but I am willing to believe that yours is an exception to these, and that every one who knows you intimately must find a necessity of interesting themselves deeply in you. But what are your opportunities, that you so confidently discuss the merits of the question, as if the determination of it were in your power? Has the Princess engaged to interest herself in your affairs or any other of your acquaintances at Florence? If indeed it be in your power to accompany some German lady of rank to her own country, I think, under the impressions you seem to have conceived, you ought not to delay putting it into effect. It is not as if you had no scheme of life in reserve to which you can retreat. But you can always reassume your present situation [*i.e.* of a governess]. You are indeed *Germanizing* very fast, and the remark you made of the distinction between the manner in which mind is expressed upon the physiognomy or the entire figure of the Italian or the Austrian is in the choicest style of the *criticism of pure reason*. There is a great deal of truth in it; of truth surrounded and limited by so many exceptions as entirely to destroy its being, as a practical law of pathognomy. I hope you will find Germany and the Germans answer your expectations. I have had no opportunity of forming an idea of them. Their philosophy, as far as I understand it, contemplates only the silver side of the shield of truth: better in this respect than the French, who only saw the narrow edge of it.

You send no news of Naples and Neapolitan affairs; we know nothing of them except what we hear from Florence. Every post may be expected to bring decisive news, for even the news that they defend themselves against so immense and well-appointed a force is decisive. I hate the cowardly envy which prompts such base stories as Sgricci's about the Neapolitans: a set of slaves, who dare not to imitate the high example of clasping even the shadow of Freedom, allege the ignorance and excesses of a populace, whom oppression has made savages in sentiment and understanding.

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CHAP. IX. That the populace of the city of Naples are brutal who denies to be [word undeciphered]; they cannot improvise tragedies as Sgricci can, but is it certain that under no excitement they would be incapable of more enthusiasm for their country? Besides it is not of them we speak, but of the people of the kingdom of Naples, the cultivators of the soil, whom a sudden and great impulse might awaken into citizens and men, as the French and Spaniards have been awakened, and may render instruments of a system of future social life before which the existing anarchies of Europe will be dissolved and absorbed. This feeling is base among the Tuscans about Naples. As to the Austrians, I doubt not they are strong men, well disciplined, obeying the master motion like the wheels of a perfect engine; they may even have, as men, more individual excellence and perfection (not that I believe it) than the Neapolitans; but all these things, if the spirit of Regeneration is abroad, are chaff before the storm; the very elements and events will fight against them; indignation and shameful repulse will burn after them to the vallies of the Alps. Lombardy will renew the league against the Imperial power; Germany itself will wrest from its oppressors a power confided to them under stipulations, which, after having assumed, they refused to carry into effect. You have seen or heard, I suppose, of the note sent by the British ministry to the Allied sovereigns. Even the unprincipled Castlereagh dared not join them against Naples, and ventured to condemn the principles of their alliance, saying as much as to forbid them to touch Spain or Portugal. If the Austrians meet with any serious check, they may as well at once retire, for the good spirit of the World is out against them. If they march to Naples at once, let us hide our heads in sorrow, for our hopes of political good are vain.

My dearest girl, I wish you would contrive some means of causing the petition of Emilia to be presented to the Grand-Duchess. I have engaged that I will procure its presentation, and although perhaps we may conceive little hope from the application, there is yet the possibility of success. She made *me* write the petition for her, though she could have done it a thousand times better herself; for she has written to the Princess Rospigliosi to entreat her to second the prayer of the petition in a manner that I am persuaded must produce some effect, it is so impressive and pathetic. The petition is the very reverse, but these affairs are less determined by words than by facts. Would Bojti present

it? No, that is not good. Could you ask Madame Martini to do CHAP.IX. so, or Madame Orlandini? Pray do something for me about this, <sup>Jan.-May, 1821.</sup> otherwise I must come to Florence, which does not suit me in any manner. . . .

What pleasure it gives me to hear that you are well! Health is the greatest possession, health of body and mind, as the writer, weak enough in both, too well knows. Tell me particularly how you get on with your Italian friends. Study German; I will give you a dictionary, if I can find one at Leghorn. "Be strong, live happy, and love," says Milton. Adieu, dear girl; confide, and persuade yourself of my eternal and tender regard. Yours, with deepest affection,

S.

Keats is very ill at Naples. I have written to him to ask him to come to Pisa, without, however, inviting him into our own house. We are not rich enough for that sort of thing. Poor fellow! I am provoked at Sgricci's assumption, and shall certainly never allow him to make the use you allude to of me.\*

Clasping, through a noble error, as Shelley says, "the shadow of Freedom," Italy found only disillusion, apathy, and for a time despair. But the struggle on behalf of liberty is not of one generation; the battle-plain is wide, and at various points of the strife the fortunes of the day are various. The ardour of spirit which leads to temporary misfortune here may elsewhere be the pledge of victory. Italy might not overthrow the Austrians in 1821, yet, were not the spirit abroad which brought defeat upon her hopes, Greece might never have found deliverance from the Turk. Sunday, April 1, was a memorable day at Casa Aulla.† "Read Greek," Mary records in her journal. "Alex. Mavrocordato calls with news about Greece. He is as gay as a caged eagle just free. Call on Emilia Viviani. Walk with Williams. He spends the evening

\* On the same page of the letter to Claire may be read the cancelled words, in Shelley's handwriting—

"MY DEAR KEATS,

"I learn this moment that you are at Naples, and that . . ."

† On March 5, 1821, Shelley and Mary moved to their new lodgings.

CHAP. IX. with us." And next day, "*Monday, April 2.*—Read Greek. Jan.-May, Alex. Mavrocordato calls with the Proclamation of Ipsilanti. 1821.

Write to him. Ride with Shelley into the Cascine. A divine day, with a north-west wind. The theatre in the evening." Mary Shelley's letter of April 2 to Mavrocordato, bright with ardent aspirations for the Greek cause, released the prince, her tutor, during the remainder of his residence in Pisa from the self-imposed task of a daily lesson in Greek. "Très chère et généreuse amie," he wrote in reply. "Si une seule goutte de sang ne coulait pas dans mes veines, votre chère lettre de hier aurait été assez suffisante pour réveiller dans mon âme l'amour de la liberté." Yes, he would accept her offer of freedom during the hours of tuition; but his only happy hours henceforth in Pisa would be those spent at Casa Aulla. On the banks of Achelous, as on those of the Arno, he would ever be Mary Shelley's very grateful, very faithful, very devoted friend and admirer.

On the same day on which Mavrocordato called with the proclamation of the insurgent Prince Hypsilantes, Mary eagerly communicated the news to Claire in a letter which Shelley continued and completed.

*Mary Shelley to Claire Clairmont.\**

MY DEAR CLAIRE,

Greece has declared its freedom! Prince Mavrocordato had made us expect this event for some weeks past. Yesterday, he came *rayonnant de joie*; he had been ill for some days, but he forgot all his pains. Ipsilanti, a Greek general in the service of Russia, has collected together 10,000 Greeks and entered Wallachia, declaring the liberty of his country. The Morea—Epirus—Servia are in revolt. Greece will most certainly be free. The worst part of this news for us is that our amiable prince will leave us—he will of course join his countrymen as soon as possible; never did man appear so happy; yet he sacrifices family, fortune, everything to the hope of freeing his country. Such men

\* At the top of the page, Mary writes "Ὑψηλάντη Ὑψηλάντη," attempts to set down in Greek characters the name of the leader of the Greeks.

are repaid—such succeed. You may conceive the deep sympathy CHAP. IX.  
 that we feel with his joy on this occasion, tinged as it must be Jan.-May,  
 with anxiety for success, made serious by the knowledge of the 1821.  
 blood that must be shed on this occasion. What a delight it will  
 be to visit Greece free!

April has opened with a weather truly heavenly; after a whole week of libeccio rain and wind, it is delightful to enjoy one of these days peculiar to Italy in this early season—the clear sky, animating sun, and fresh yet not cold breeze; just that delicious season when pleasant thoughts bring sad ones to the mind;\* when every sensation seems to make a double effect, and every moment of the day is divided, felt, and counted. One is not gay, at least I am not, but peaceful and at peace with all the world.

I write you a short letter to-day, but I could not resist the temptation of acquainting you with the changes in Greece, the moment Prince Mavrocordato gave us leave to mention it.

I hope that your spirits will get better with this favourable change of weather. Florence must be perfectly delightful. And the white paint as soon as you can, and two striscie for me.

Shelley says that he will finish this letter. We hear from none in England.

Ever yours,

M. W. S.

April 2, 1821.

*[Shelley continues the same letter.]*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I hope you have somewhat recovered your spirits since you last wrote to me; if so, pray tell me, as it makes me very melancholy to hear that you are so much depressed. The weather is a medicine for almost any dejection which does not spring from a naturally imperfect or deranged frame. My health is very fluctuating and uncertain, and change of season brings a change rather than a relief of ills. I live, however, for certain intoxicating moments, which are the "ounce of sweet that outweighs a pound of sour," and which no person deprived of memory need despair of possessing.

Tell me what you mean to do on the 20th, and how are your prospects with the Princess. Naples will be no place to visit at present, and you are much deceived by those who surround you if you imagine that the success of the Austrians in that country has

\* A reminiscence from Wordsworth's "Lines written in Early Spring."



CHAP. IX. terminated the war in Italy. We are yet undecided for the summer; say something to fix our determination. The Catholic Emancipation has passed the second reading by a majority of 11 in 497. This will give the Government a momentary strength. Pray order Calderon for me without delay; try if you can urge the bookseller to some sort of speed.

Jan.-May,  
1821.

Pray don't imagine that the trees upon the letter sent to [by?] Mary are my manufacture. I disclaim such daubs, and I had hoped that you knew my style too well to impute them to me. The love-letters themselves do not seem to have been meant for you.\* Is there no other Clara Clairmont but the one to whom I declare myself the constant and affectionate friend,

S. ? †

"My health is very fluctuating and uncertain, and a change of season brings a change rather than a relief of ills." These sad words receive confirmation from Medwin's account of Shelley's state of "prostration, physical and psychical," in the winter of 1820-21. It was cruel, says Medwin, to witness his condition; yet he was "never querulous or out of temper, never by an irritable word hurt the feelings of those about him." He walked too little, Medwin thought, and read too much; never was his book forgotten, but he lacked that sign of an orderly mind—a regard for dinner, the central fact or axis of the diurnal round. "Mary," he would ask in bewilderment, "have I dined?" Tea, however, was a liquor that he loved. "There!" he would exclaim on emptying a cup, "you see I am no *a-théist*." ‡ It would be an error to suppose that he was always dejected. "At times," says Medwin, "he was as sportive as his child, with whom he would play by the hour on the floor, and his wit flowed in a continuous stream." Yet

\* Claire notes in her journal, "*February 27*.—A ridiculous anonymous love-letter from Pisa." "*March 17*.—A second anonymous love-letter from Pisa." In one of her note-books she writes of herself, "In 1818, she refused an offer of marriage from P——: he knew her whole history. In 1820, she tried to like Mr. Reveley, who made her an offer of marriage; but she found she could not, and refused him."

† The drawing of a tree follows, with the words "That is my style."

‡ So Medwin puts it in a manuscript note in the copy of his "Life of Shelley," prepared by him for a second edition.

his physical anguish was occasionally intense; during the CHAP. IX. paroxysms of his malady "he would roll on the floor in agony." Jan.-May,  
1821. At Shelley's request, Medwin tried the effect of what at that time was termed "animal magnetism," and threw him with ease into the mesmeric trance. "Read 'Magnet'"—possibly a manuscript treatise on animal magnetism written by Medwin—is an entry in Mary's journal of December 15, 1820. "Shelley," Claire records on the same day, "is magnetized; he begs them not to ask him more questions, because he shall say what he ought not." During a second experiment he improvised some Italian verses, Medwin tells us, which were faultless, although he had at that time never written one.\* After Medwin's departure from Pisa, Jane Williams became the operator. "How may your malady be cured?" the sleeper was asked. The enigmatical answer came, "What would cure me, that would kill me."†

In April, when the divine weather of the opening days of the month had given place to "abominable libeccio, siroccos, rain, and wind," a sudden trouble darkened the air, which, however, like the clouds, was swiftly borne away. "A letter that overturns us," writes Mary in her journal on April 11. This letter announced the stoppage of Shelley's income—and gave no hint in explanation of the disastrous tidings. With many and various demands on his purse—debts of Godwin, an allowance to Claire, one hundred and twenty pounds a year due to Dr. Hume on behalf of his children—his income had not proved larger than his needs; and just now, in spite of a droll remonstrance from Hogg, who smiled at the wanton chivalry of a debtor in foreign parts, Shelley was endeavouring to settle with old creditors from whom Harriet had made purchases in 1813. On the instant he found himself penniless.

\* If we could credit Trelawny's statement that "Epipsychidion" was first written in Italian verse, Shelley's facility might receive some explanation.

† The poem in which this incident is recorded, "The Magnetic Lady to her Patient," was written in the year 1822. Medwin says that Shelley referred to lithotomy. A different turn seems to be given to the words in the poem.

CHAP. IX. Two days later the mystery was cleared up. Thirty pounds, Jan.-May, 1821. Dr. Hume's quarterly allowance, lay ready for him with Shelley's banker, but through an oversight it was not made payable, or had not been paid. Shelley's attorney and Sir Timothy's, between them—ingenious men of the law—had contrived to discover an occasion for putting the matter into Chancery, and a suit was commenced. Happily, Shelley was not without a friend in London, a lover of letters who was also a clear-sighted man of business—Horace Smith. Through his vigorous intervention the matter was speedily set to rights, but not before he had given proof of the warmth of his heart and the soundness of his judgment. "On a review of the whole affair," he wrote to Shelley, "it did appear such a cowardly cabal against an absent man—it evinced such an insulting indifference to your feelings; it appeared so cruel that, amid so many parties (some calling themselves your friends), not one could be found to give a hint to you or me, that, in a towering passion, I sat down and wrote to Dr. Hume, finding the utmost difficulty to restrain my indignation within civil bounds. Read this letter and tell me whether I do not deserve credit for subduing my feelings to such temperate language."

"How excessively grieved I am," Shelley wrote to Claire (April 13), "that I have made you share our false alarm! . . . I shall send you the money for the ensuing month directly. Our fright was not small, for we could never conjecture the truth. Whatever I have or have not, however, is dear to me in possession chiefly as an instrument of your peace and independence." \*

Never before, since he was a schoolboy, had Shelley lived so long on the shore of lake or river without becoming the possessor of a boat. There were no pleasure-boats on the Arno, and the shallowness of its waters, says Mrs. Shelley, except in

\* In June the matter was finally settled, the Chancellor decreeing that £30 should be regularly reserved each quarter for Dr. Hume.

winter-time, when the stream is too turbid and impetuous for CHAP. IX. boating, rendered it difficult to get any skiff light enough to float. But a boat Shelley must have, a boat of some sort, and one which should suit a buyer with but little money to spend on his recreation. For a few pauls Henry Reveley obtained at Leghorn a flat-bottomed boat about ten feet long; at Shelley's request a keel was contrived, and a small mast and sail were added. It held three persons, and Shelley in his frail shallop, to the horror of Italian onlookers, delighted to navigate the Arno, alone or with a friend.\* On obtaining possession of his new toy, Shelley, who was at Leghorn with Williams, resolved to start on a trial-trip that same evening (April 16), and voyage by moonlight along the canal to Pisa. Mrs. Gisborne insisted that Henry, who was skilful with his hands and an excellent swimmer, should be of the crew. Under a huge sail, and with a stiff breeze blowing, the craft made rapid way. When about half-way to Pisa, Williams, standing up of a sudden, laid hold of the top of the mast to steady himself. In a moment the boat was overset.

"That canal," writes Henry Reveley, "is broad and deep; so finding no bottom, I sent Williams on shore, as he could swim a little, and then caught hold of Shelley, and told him to be calm and quiet, and I would take him on shore. His answer, characteristic of his undaunted courage, was, 'All right; never more comfortable in my life; do what you will with me.' But as soon as I set him down on shore, he fell flat down on his face in a faint. I left him to the care of Williams, who was already on shore, and plunged into the water to secure the wreck, and hauled the boat on shore. By that time Shelley was recovered, and we started off across country towards a 'casale,' which I

\* Mrs. Shelley describes it as a boat of laths and pitched canvas, "such as the huntsmen carry about with them on the Maremma to cross the sluggish but deep streams that intersect the forests." I am not sure that she may not have thought of a boat subsequently bought. Her memory misled her when she described a voyage from Pisa to Leghorn, round the coast, as having preceded the upset in the canal.

CHAP. IX. perceived in the distance by moonlight. The 'casale' is an immense farmhouse, where several contadini families live together, with perhaps fifty or a hundred labourers, but it is only inhabited at certain seasons. I had no sooner shouted a view-halloo to wake them up, as it was two in the morning, than above twenty muskets were pointed at us from the windows, the inmates having no other idea than that we were a party of armed bandits preparing for attack, though the only booty, perhaps, besides provisions, would have been the gold crosses and earrings of the women . . . With much ado I made the contadini understand in my broad Italian we were shipwrecked mariners. So the women were knocked up, and set to blow up the fire on their enormous hearths, which they did with a will. They lent us dry warm clothes, and brought out plenty of good though homely food.

"Poor Shelley was in ecstasies of delight after his ducking. Williams and I did not care for it. After breakfast, Shelley and Williams walked off to Pisa, and I took the boat back to Leghorn and repaired her."

"Our ducking last night," Shelley wrote from Pisa to Henry Reveley, "has added fire instead of quenching the nautical ardour which produced it; and I consider it a good omen in any enterprise that it begins in evil, as being more probable that it will end in good." From a letter to Claire, written about a fortnight after the adventure, it appears that he waited with longing for the arrival of the boat from Leghorn, which happy event took place on the day after that on which he wrote. Mary was his companion upon the river on May 3; and on the 4th, in a sea of glassy calm, Shelley and Reveley voyaged from the mouth of the Arno round the coast to Leghorn.

*Shelley to Claire Clairmont.*

Sunday [April 29, 1821].

MY DEAREST CLAIRE,

It is not for want of interest in your plans and feelings that I have not written to you, but imagining that Mary managed

the *rude stuff*, the mass of the correspondence, and not knowing CHAP. IX.  
Jan.-May,  
1821. that I had anything peculiar to say to you, I had kept the silence of one to whom letters, and indeed communications of any kind, are either a great pain or a great pleasure. So far have I been from neglecting you in my thought, that I have lately had with MRS. Mason long and serious conversations respecting your situation and prospects; conversations too long, too important, and embracing too various a complication of views to detail in a letter; you can perhaps guess at some of them.

I am most anxious to know your expectations and determinations at Florence. Whatever these may be, either there or elsewhere, believe that no view which I can take of any plan you may determine on will be influenced by anything else than a consideration of *your own* ultimate advantage. I feel, my dear girl, that in case the failure of your expectations at Florence should induce you to adopt other plans, *we*, that is you and I, ought to have a conversation together.

My health is in general much the same; somewhat amended by the divine weather that has fallen upon us, but still characterized by irritability and depression, or moments of almost supernatural elevation of spirits. My side begins, however, to feel the influence of the relaxing year. I think I have been better altogether this winter. I wish to think so, in spite of the strong motives which should impel me to desire to exist under another form. I have bought a boat, which Williams overturned the first evening by taking hold of the top of the mast, as you might any boat under a sloop of war. I expect that the exercise of sailing, etc., will do good to my health. I have bought it instead of a horse, which Vaccà recommended, but which would cost more money, spirits, time, trouble, and care than I have to expend conveniently. Henry Reveley has got her now at Leghorn to paint and refit; and she will be a very nice little shell for the Nautilus, your friend, who has enough to do in taming his own will, without the additional burden of regulating that of a horse, and still worse of a groom. The Gisbornes are going to England. They have been here for two days on a visit proposed by themselves, and return to-morrow. My manners to them have been gentle, but cold.\* Not a word of

\* The Gisbornes arrived on Thursday, April 26. Shelley had written to Henry Reveley, pressing them to come. "We expect with impatience our false friends, who have so long cheated us with delay" (April 17). And Mary to

CHAP. IX. the steamboat. . . . I do not write anything at present. I feel  
Jan.-May, incapable of composition.

1821.

I believe it is now certain that Emilia will marry, although it is undecided whom. A great and a painful weight will be taken off my mind by that event. Poor thing! she suffers dreadfully in her prison.

Adieu; your affectionate friend,

S.

Shelley's consultations with Mrs. Mason about Claire's position may have had reference to a new grief that had come upon her. "Claire has passed the Carnival at Florence," Shelley wrote to Peacock, "and has been preternaturally gay." Her journal shows how bright and full of varied interests was the time. But the Carnival had only just gone by when a blow struck her under which she staggered and reeled. "Rainy day," she writes in the journal on March 15. "Letters from Emilia, Shelley, and Mary, with enclosures from Ravenna. The child in the convent of Bagnacavallo. Spend a miserable day." Allegra being now four years old, and quite beyond the control of servants, so Byron told Mr. Hoppner, he had no resource but to place her for a time in the convent at Bagnacavallo, twelve miles distant from Ravenna, his present place of abode. At Bagnacavallo the air was good, and she would have "her learning advanced" and "her morals and religion inculcated." He did not purpose to give an English education to a natural child; with a fair foreign education, and five or six thousand pounds, she might marry respectably. He desired that his child should be a Roman Catholic, since he looked on Catholicism as "the best religion, as it is assuredly the oldest of the various branches of Christianity." It was in vain that Allegra's mother argued, pleaded, and implored against Byron's decision. He had promised her at Geneva that the child, whatever its sex, should never be away from

Mrs. Gisborne, "You see the fine weather is come—doubly fine if it bring friendship with it. So we may expect you."

one of its parents. What are the Italian convent-educated CHAP. IX.  
 women? asked Claire. Bad wives and most unnatural Jan.-May,  
 mothers, licentious and ignorant. How gravely will this 1821.  
 treatment of his daughter injure Byron with the world! How fully will it justify Lady Byron in her conduct! "I alone," wrote Claire, "misled by love to believe you good, trusted to you, and now I reap the fruits. . . . I resigned Allegra to you that she might be benefited by advantages which I could not give her. It was natural for me to expect that your daughter would become an object of affection, and would receive an education becoming the child of an English nobleman." Since this was not to be, Claire proposed that she should herself be allowed to place Allegra, at her own charge, in one of the best English boarding-schools, to be chosen by the child's father. "I know not how to address you," continues Claire, "in terms fit to awaken acquiescence to the above requests; yet neither do I know why you should doubt the wisdom and propriety of what I propose, seeing that I have never with regard to Allegra sought anything but her advantage, even at the price of total unhappiness to myself." In addition, Miss Clairmont begged that the opinion of Madame Hoppner might be taken, as that of a person friendly to Byron, free from passion in this matter, and competent to judge fairly of the difference between an Italian and an English education.\*

The question as to Allegra's education did not directly concern Shelley, but whatever brought pain to Claire was a matter of deep regret to him. Yet when Byron wrote to him, and when he had consulted with Mary, he did not hesitate in upholding Byron's decision. In no respect could he or Mary discover that Byron had acted unworthily towards Allegra. No doubt Claire, in her letters, had been foolish and provoking; but her errors were those of unwise love, and therefore she should be forgiven. There was no quarrel with Byron for

\* Florence, March 24, 1821.



CHAP. IX. Shelley to take up; rather, he hoped that their friendship  
Jan.-May, would renew itself and increase in strength. It would surely  
1821. be so if Byron could choose as his place of summer residence  
the Baths of San Giuliano, whither Shelley and Mary were  
now preparing to remove.

## CHAPTER X.

## SECOND SUMMER AT THE BATHS—RAVENNA.

“THE mountains sweep to the plain like waves that meet in a chasm; the olive woods are as green as a sea, and are waving in the wind; the shadows of the clouds are spotting the bosoms of the hills; a heron comes sailing over me, a butterfly flits near; at intervals the pines give forth the sweet and prolonged response to the wind; the myrtle bushes are in bud, and the soil beneath me is carpeted with odoriferous flowers.”

CHAP. X.  
May-Oct.  
1821.

This fragment, written in 1821 in one of Shelley's notebooks, images probably some of the beauty which surrounded him at the Baths of St. Giuliano. From May 8 to October 25, except for a brief absence at Florence, and a somewhat longer visit to Ravenna, he dwelt in quiet under the green hillside, among the shadows of the woods, or sailed hither and thither in his boat upon the waters of the Serchio. Edward Williams and Jane, who was now completely recovered after the birth of her second child—a girl—were four miles distant, occupying the beautiful villa of the Marchese Poschi, under the olive and chestnut woods of Pugnano. There were fears that Williams was suffering from disease of the lungs, but as summer went past these fears diminished, and by the close of the year he was strong and well. During the early months of summer he was engaged on his play, “The Promise; or, a Year, a Month, and a Day,” which at the end of July was sent to England on the

## CHAP. X.

May-Oct.  
1821.

chance of its being represented on the boards of some theatre. Shelley took a kindly interest in Williams's dramatic attempt, and had great hopes of its success before an audience. For his part, Williams had never met so interesting, so wonderful a man as his new companion. "Shelley," he wrote in April, "is certainly a man of most astonishing genius, in appearance extraordinarily young, of manners mild and amiable, but withal full of life and fun." The boat, accordingly, was not idle on the waters which lay between the Baths and Pugnano. "We went to and fro to see them [Mr. and Mrs. Williams]," writes Mary, "in our boat by the canal; which, fed by the Serchio, was, though an artificial, a full and picturesque stream, making its way under verdant banks, sheltered by trees that dipped their boughs into the murmuring waters. By day, multitudes of ephemera darted to and fro on the surface; at night, the fire-flies came out among the shrubs on the banks; the cicale at noon kept up their hum; the aziola cooed in the quiet evening.\* It was a pleasant summer, bright in all but Shelley's health and inconstant spirits; yet he enjoyed himself greatly, and became more and more attached to the part of the country where chance appeared to cast us. Sometimes he projected taking a farm situated on the height of one of the near hills, surrounded by chestnut and pine woods, and overlooking a wide extent of country; or settling still further in the maritime Apennines at Massa." That poem of radiant beauty, touched by spiritual sorrow, "The Boat on the Serchio," has kept fresh and living after half a century the brightness of a July morning in Italy, with all the prospect of a long day of freedom and joy upon the stream; Williams and Shelley standing by the boat-side, while Domenic brings the mast and sails; dawn stepping down the hills; memories of happy hours at Eton; a pang to

\* Mary notes in her journal, "*June 28.*—Go to Pugnano in the boat. The warmest day this month. Fire-flies in the evening." "*July 11.*—The cicala for the first time, and the first real fine summer day."

think of the sorrow of the world of men ; and a sense, in the opening of this new day, of the presence of Him

CHAP. X.  
May-Oct.  
1821.

“ Who shaped us to his ends and not our own.” \*

During this summer Mary worked steadily at her historical novel, “ Valperga,” yet she found time for the study of Homer and our elder English drama, as well as for friendly visits to Jane Williams, Mrs. Mason, and Emilia Viviani. Mavrocordato, not yet on his way to Greece, but soon to depart, either resided occasionally at the Baths or was a frequent visitor, and if he were absent letters came from him to Mary—letters written in French—giving her and Shelley the latest intelligence of the war, and expressing his hopes and fears for his country. On May 16, the prince, who, like Shelley, ordinarily cared but little for his attire, came to Pugnano “ in his new dress,” and escorted Mary that evening home to the Baths. Before next month was ended he had written his farewell, and sailed (June 26) for Greece.

The earlier days at the Baths of Pisa were among the most memorable days of Shelley’s life as a poet. “ Keats is very ill at Naples,” he had informed Claire in a letter of February 18. “ I have written to ask him to come to Pisa.” At that time Keats was not at Naples, but in Rome, enduring the long agony of his last illness. The relations of the two young poets before Shelley’s departure from England had been friendly, and on Shelley’s side cordial, yet had not been quite free from difficulties and misconceptions. In 1817, Keats had declined Shelley’s invitation to visit him at Marlow, believing that he could best work out the fruits of his genius alone, and fearing that the influences of Shelley’s peculiar modes of thinking and feeling might perturb his imagination, or limit its free scope. Keeping thus somewhat isolated, he fancied that Hunt and Shelley were hurt because he had not officially

\* A Domenico Beni, who, I find, was sent early in 1822 to attend Miss Clairmont to Pisa, may be the Domenic of the poem.

CHAP. X. shown them his "Endymion," and even that they were not  
 May-Oct. indisposed "to dissect or anatomize any trip or slip" he might  
 1821. have made. It is true that Shelley was not quick to discover the full greatness of Keats's powers. When "Endymion" reached him in Italy a year after its publication, he told Ollier that much praise was due to him for having read it, "the author's intention appearing to be that no person should possibly get to the end of it." Yet he found it "full of some of the highest and finest gleams of poetry," and in particular the "Hymn to Pan," in the first book of that poem, was regarded by Shelley as affording "the surest promise of ultimate excellence." \* On hearing from Mr. Gisborne of Keats's illness in the summer of 1820, Shelley wrote to the invalid (July 27), inviting him to Pisa in words of graceful kindness. "This consumption," he wrote, "is a disease peculiarly fond of people who write such good verses as you have done, and with the assistance of an English winter it can often indulge its selection. I do not think that young and amiable poets are bound to gratify its taste. But seriously (for I am joking on what I am very anxious about) I think you would do well to pass the winter in Italy, and avoid so tremendous an accident; and if you think it as necessary as I do, so long as you continue to find Pisa or its neighbourhood agreeable to you, Mrs. Shelley unites with myself in urging that you would take up your residence with us." He had lately read "Endymion" again, and "even with a new sense of the treasures of poetry it contains, though treasures poured forth with indistinct profusion." "I feel persuaded," he adds, "that you are capable of the greatest things, so you but will." Ollier would send Keats copies of Shelley's books; and as a note of warning against what he regarded as one of the errors of the poetical style of "Endymion," Shelley calls attention to

\* On May 14, 1820, Shelley wrote to Ollier, "Keats, I hope, is going to show himself a great poet; like the sun, to burst through the clouds, which, though dyed in the finest colours of the air, obscured his rising."

the freedom and variety of style observable in his "Prometheus Unbound" and the "Cenci." "In poetry I have sought to avoid system and mannerism. I wish those who excel me in genius would pursue the same plan." CHAP. X.  
May-Oct.  
1821.

Keats was gratified by Shelley's kind thought and friendly words, but he did not accept the invitation to Pisa. Though far from resenting Shelley's counsel in matters of poetical art, he felt that he also was an artist, and was qualified to advise his brother-poet. "An artist," he writes, "must serve Mammon; he must have 'self-concentration'—selfishness, perhaps. You, I am sure, will forgive me for sincerely remarking that you might curb your magnanimity, and be more of an artist, and load every rift of your subject with ore.\* The thought of such discipline must fall like cold chains upon you, who perhaps never sat with your wings furled for six months together."

It was not until he had received and read the volume containing "Lamia," "The Pot of Basil," and "Hyperion," that Shelley knew Keats aright.† Two days before Claire's departure to Professor Bojti's house, he read aloud the "Hyperion;" and on bidding her farewell in Florence, he left with her copies of his own "Prometheus" and of this new volume of Keats. "I am happy that the 'Hyperion' and the 'Prometheus' please you," he wrote to her. "My verses please so few persons, that I make much of the encouragement of the few whose judgment (if I were to listen to Vanity, the familiar spirit of our race) I should say, with Shakespeare and Plato, 'outweighed a whole theatre of others.'" "Where is Keats now?" he asked Mrs. Hunt on November 11. "I am anxiously expecting him in Italy, when

\* Shelley's "Cenci" suggested these remarks.

† Yet always there was imperfect sympathy on Shelley's part, for he writes to Peacock (February 15, 1821), "His other poems are worth little; but if the 'Hyperion' be not grand poetry, none has been produced by our contemporaries." Beside the poems named on the title-page, Keats's volume of 1820 contained his noblest odes.

CHAP. X. I shall take care to bestow every possible attention on him.  
 May-Oct. 1821. I consider his a most valuable life, and I am deeply interested in his safety. I intend to be the physician both of his body and his soul; to keep the one warm, and to teach the other Greek and Spanish. I am aware, indeed, in part, that I am nourishing a rival who will far surpass me; and this is an additional motive, and will be an added pleasure." About this time Shelley began a letter to the editor of the *Quarterly Review*, a letter never sent, in which he pleads against the cruel judgment pronounced against "Endymion," while admitting the "false taste" with which the poem is "replenished;" appeals to Gifford's humanity by informing him of the sufferings and injury which, as he believed, the *Quarterly* article had inflicted on Keats; and demands a revision of the sentence of condemnation on the ground of the extraordinary strength and beauty of the fragment "Hyperion" in the recently published volume.

The death of Keats, which took place on the night of February 23, 1821, was announced in the *Examiner* of March 25, and it was probably from its pages or from a letter of Horace Smith, written a week later, that Shelley received the first tidings of the event.\* Deep personal affection for Keats he had never felt; but the untimely death of a young man of genius, the victim, as he believed, of unmerited literary persecution, moved him to sorrow and indignation. The "Adonais," which takes its place in literature beside the laments of Moschus for Bion, and of Milton for Lycidas, belongs to that class of elegiac poems which does not aim at perpetuating the memory of the dead by a monumental portrait (to this class belong such pieces as Daniel's memorial of the Earl of Devonshire, and Taylor's admirable lines in remembrance of Edward Villiers), but rather celebrates the dead through a celebration of grief and an im-

\* On April 19, Mrs. Shelley wrote to Mrs. Gisborne, "Henry will have told you, perhaps, that poor Keats is dead—at Rome."

passioned meditation upon death. We do not know Keats more truly when we have read Shelley's poem, but our spirits are attuned to contemplate aright the untimely and sudden withdrawal, at whatever time or place, of bright things from earth—a withdrawal which we must lament, yet which is only apparent and not real. The chief portrait contained in the poem is that incidentally introduced of Shelley himself.

CHAP. X.  
May-Oct.  
1821.

“He, as I guess,  
Had gazed on Nature's naked loveliness,  
Actæon-like, and now he fled astray  
With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness,  
And his own thoughts, along that rugged way,  
Pursued, like raging hounds, their father and their prey.

“A pard-like Spirit beautiful and swift—  
A Love in desolation masked—a Power  
Girt round with weakness.”

Yet, though it contain no sculptured portrait of Keats, “Adonais” is the costliest monument in verse ever erected to the memory of an English singer. Before its close the poem rises into an impassioned hymn of immortality—the immortality of that spirit from which man arises, in which he lives and moves, and to the blessed life of which he returns at last. Those elevating and tranquilizing stanzas imaging the beauty of the Roman cemetery seem written with some prophetic sense against the day of Shelley's own burial.

On June 5, Shelley informed Mr. Gisborne that the poem would shortly be finished, and three days later he wrote to Ollier, bidding him announce it for publication; but after that date some fifteen stanzas were added or inserted. On the 11th, he wrote again to Ollier. “‘Adonais,’” he says, “is finished; and you will soon receive it. It is little adapted for popularity, but is perhaps the least imperfect of my compositions.” The account of Keats's last hours, written by Colonel Finch and forwarded by Mr. Gisborne, reached Shelley after his poem had been written. “I do not think,” he wrote, “that if I had



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1821.

seen it before, I could have composed my poem. The enthusiasm of the imagination would have overpowered the sentiment.” Shelley esteemed his work from the imaginative craftsman’s point of view as “a highly wrought piece of art,” perhaps better, he says, in point of composition than anything he had yet written. In order to secure accuracy in printing, he entrusted his manuscript (June 16) to a Pisan press, where the types of the celebrated French printers Didot were used.\* On July 13, he received the first copy, which was immediately despatched to Mr. and Mrs. Gisborne at Leghorn. “My dearest friends,” he wrote, in reply to their letter of thanks and approval, “I am fully repaid for the painful emotions from which some verses of my poem sprung, by your sympathy and approbation, which is all the reward I expect, and as much as I desire. It is not for me to judge whether, in the high praise your feelings assign me, you are right or wrong. The poet and the man are two different natures; though they exist together, they may be unconscious of each other, and incapable of deciding on each other’s powers and efforts by any reflex act. The decision of the cause, whether or no I am a poet, is removed from the present time to the hour when our posterity shall assemble; but the court is a very severe one, and I fear that the verdict will be, ‘Guilty—death!’” Shelley had no confidence that either his own writings or those of Keats would secure public attention for the present, and this it was, he informed Severn, which prevented him from making an attempt to collect the literary remains of Keats, and publish them with a life and criticism. Yet he could not doubt that the elegy, on which he had wrought with all his powers as an artist, would live for the delight of future generations. “I confess I should be surprised,” he wrote to Ollier (November 11, 1821), “if *that* poem were born to an immortality of oblivion.” Shelley hoped to subjoin to the London edition of “Adonais”

\* A beautiful facsimile of this rare first edition has been edited for “The Shelley Society” by Mr. Thomas J. Wise.

a study of the genius of Keats, but no traces of such a study can be found among his papers. No London edition other than that transmitted from Pisa appeared. But seven years after Shelley's death the poem was reprinted at Cambridge, by a society of young and enthusiastic admirers of Keats and Shelley. Either Monckton Milnes or Arthur Hallam read and corrected the proofs.\*

CHAP. X.  
May-Oct.  
1821.

An untoward incident came to trouble Shelley at the moment when he was putting the last touches to his "Adonais." "I hear that a bookseller of the name of Clark," he wrote to Ollier on June 11, "has published a poem which I wrote in early youth, called 'Queen Mab.' I have not seen it for some years, but inasmuch as I recollect it is villanous trash; and I dare say much better fitted to injure than to serve the cause which it advocates. In the name of poetry, and as you are a bookseller (you observe the strength of these conjurations), pray give all manner of publicity to my disapprobation of this publication; in fact, protest for me in an advertisement in the strongest terms. I ought to say, however, that I am obliged to this piratical fellow in one respect, that he has omitted, with a delicacy for which I thank him heartily, a foolish dedication to my late wife, the publication of which would have annoyed me, and indeed is the only part of the business that could seriously have annoyed me—although it is my duty to protest against the whole. I have written to my attorney to do what he can to suppress it, although I fear that, after the precedent of Southey, there is little probability of an injunction being granted." †

\* I do not venture to state it in my text as a fact, but it seems to me probable that at this time Shelley had an ambitious poetical work in contemplation, entitled "The Creator." On June 5, 1821, he writes to Mr. and Mrs. Gisborne, "My unfortunate box! it contained a chaos of the elements of Charles I. If the idea of the *Creator* had been packed up with them, it would have shared the same fate; and that, I am afraid, has undergone another sort of shipwreck." And Mary to Mr. and Mrs. Gisborne, June 30, "The 'Creator' has not yet made himself heard. I get on with my occupation ['Valperga'], and hope to finish the rough transcript this month."

† In 1821, Southey's "Wat Tyler" was printed by a piratical bookseller.

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1821.

A writer in the *London Literary Gazette* for May 19, although, on a perusal of "Queen Mab," almost deprived, as he says, of the power of expressing his sentiments by an overwhelming mixture of sorrow, indignation, and loathing, contrived to fill ten columns of the journal with a review containing the foulest abuse of the book and its author. So strongly was it impressed on the reviewer's mind that the writer of "Queen Mab" was one of the darkest of the fiends, clothed with a human body to enable him to gratify his enmity against the human race, that it seemed well to inquire of a friend, who had seen this demon in the flesh, what he was like—"as if a cloven foot, or horn, or flames from the mouth, must have marked the external appearance of so bitter an enemy to mankind." "We were almost disappointed," the writer goes on, "to learn that the author was only a tall, boyish-looking man, with eyes of unearthly brightness, and a countenance of the wildest cast; that he strode about with a hurried and impatient gait, and that a perturbed spirit seemed to preside over all his movements. It is not, then, in his outward semblance, but in his inner man, that the explicit demon is seen." No wonder that Horace Smith was often stopped in the streets and asked whether Shelley were really guilty of all the enormities laid to his charge. "Of course," writes Smith, "I assert their utter falsehood; but the good Christians never stick at confirming one another's lies against a common enemy, as they consider you."

It was not in Shelley's power to restrain the publication of "Queen Mab;" the work, being calculated to do injury to society, had ceased to be the property of its author. But he could publicly disclaim connection with the issue of the volume, and this he did in a letter to the editor of the *Examiner*. Not that he would be supposed to have gone over, like the

The author applied for an injunction to restrain the publication, which Lord Eldon refused on the ground that, the publication being one calculated to do injury to society, the author could not reclaim his property in it.

author of "Wat Tyler," to the camp of the enemy. In CHAP. X. November, 1817, when presenting to a Mr. Waller a copy of May-Oct. 1821. "Queen Mab," Shelley had acknowledged that it was "full of those errors which belong to youth, as far as imagery and language and a connected plan is concerned. But," he adds, "it was a sincere overflowing of the heart and mind, and that at a period when they are most uncorrupted and pure. It is the author's boast, and it constitutes no small portion of his happiness, that, after six years of added experience and reflection, the doctrine of equality, and liberty, and disinterestedness, and entire unbelief in religion of any sort, to which this poem is devoted, have gained rather than lost that beauty and that grandeur which first determined him to devote his life to the investigation and inculcation of them." So Shelley had written in 1817. In 1821, the poem was remoter from his present self; he could unreservedly condemn its intemperate spirit, and acknowledge its crudity "in all that concerns moral and political speculation, as well as in the subtler discriminations of metaphysical and religious doctrine." Yet he would not have it imagined that he had changed sides in speculation or in politics, or had become an advocate or exponent of the spirit of reaction. "I am a devoted enemy to religious, political, and domestic oppression," he declared in the *Examiner*; "and I regret this publication, not so much from literary vanity, as because I fear it is better fitted to injure than to serve the sacred cause of freedom." "I hear that the abuse against me exceeds all bounds," he wrote to Ollier (June 11). "Pray, if you see any one article particularly outrageous, send it me. As yet I have laughed; but woe to these scoundrels if they should once make me lose my temper. I have discovered that my calumniator in the *Quarterly Review* was the Rev. Mr. Milman. Priests and eunuchs have their privilege." \* *As yet I have laughed*—the laughter, which is not quite simple and honest mirth, may be heard amid the words addressed to

\* The article, as already stated, was by John T. Coleridge.

CHAP. X. Mr. Gisborne (June 16). "A droll circumstance has occurred. May-Oct. 1821. 'Queen Mab,' a poem written by me when very young, in the most furious style, with long notes against Jesus Christ, and God the Father, and the king, and bishops, and marriage, and the devil knows what, is just published by one of the low booksellers in the Strand, against my wish and consent, and all the people are at loggerheads about it. Horace Smith gives me this account. You may imagine how much I am amused. For the sake of a dignified appearance, however, and really because I wish to protest against all the bad poetry in it, I have given orders to say that it is all done against my desire, and have directed my attorney to apply to Chancery for an injunction, which he will not get." The Society for the Suppression of Vice lost no time in instituting proceedings against the publisher Clark. Such prosecutions seldom attain the end of their promoters; and the one poem of Shelley's which can truly be said to have had a popular career, is the poem whose circulation both its author and those persons most opposed to him in opinions attempted to restrain.

Shelley's good friend Horace Smith, in the spring of 1821, had hoped to visit Italy with his wife; but was prevented from leaving England by the state of Mrs. Smith's health, and by her apprehensions of danger in the south of Europe during the progress of the revolutionary struggle. Now Italy was sinking back into a sullen quietude; all immediate cause for alarm was at an end. Horace Smith requested Shelley to seek a house for him in Florence, where he purposed to remain at least until the following year. The presence of Claire in Florence seemed to make it easy for Shelley to obtain information on behalf of his friend.

*Shelley to Miss Clairmont.*

Pisa, Saturday [June 16, 1821].

MY DEAREST CLAIRE,

Have you made your mind up where you would live this summer? or is there anything new in your plans? I hear from you but seldom now you cease to correspond with Mary.

Horace Smith is coming out to Italy immediately. He requests me to discover for him in or near Florence an house fit for a very small establishment, with a garden; large enough for a family in all of seven or eight persons. He wishes also to get an *Italian woman, good cook, who speaks French*; this last I apprehend to be impossible. You know how much I wish to do my utmost in executing all Horace Smith's commissions; and I thought of coming to Florence, though it would be a great waste both of money and of health to me, for that purpose. But perhaps you could manage these affairs; of course the house will not be taken until he comes, and will be subject to his approbation. I imagine he wishes it to be unfurnished, and he is the sort of man to like a pretty, elegant, neat, well-kept little house.

CHAP. X.  
May-Oct.  
1821.

Let me see if I have any news for you. I have received a most melancholy account of the last illness of poor Keats, which I will neither tell you nor send you, for it would make you too low-spirited. My elegy on him is finished: I have dipped my pen in consuming fire to chastise his destroyers; otherwise the tone of the poem is solemn and exalted. I send it to the press here, and you will soon have a copy. Horace Smith tells me of a curious circumstance, which if I were in England would work me much annoyance. A low bookseller has got hold of "Queen Mab" and published it, and says he will defy all prosecutions, and is selling them by thousands. Horace Smith applied for an injunction on my part, but, like Southey in "Wat Tyler," was refused. The abuse which all the government prints are pouring forth on me, and, as Horace Smith says, the "diabolical calumnies which they vent, and which religion alone could inspire," is boundless. I enjoy and am amused with the turmoil of these poor people; but perhaps it is well for me that the Alps and the ocean are between us. Medwin is going to be married to a daughter of Sir E. Dalby's only fifteen years old. He is in full chase at Venice. I am trying to persuade Mary to ask your pardon: as you were in the wrong you had better not asks hers, for that is unnecessary; but write to her; if you had been in the right you would have done so.\*

Emilia's marriage is put off to September. I think of spending next winter at Florence. Mary talks of Rome. We see the Wil-

\* I.e. Mary having been in the right can afford to be magnanimous, and express regret for what was really Claire's fault.

CHAP. X. liamses constantly; nice, good-natured people; very soft society  
 May-Oct. after authors and pretenders to philosophy. Godwin's "Malthus"  
 1821. is come; a dry but clever book, with decent interspersions of cant  
 and sophistry.

Dearest girl, your most affectionate friend,

P. B. S.

I don't send you money till I hear. Do you come or no?  
 Write next post.

It was not in Miss Clairmont's power to undertake house-hunting on behalf of Horace Smith, as at this moment she was preparing to leave Florence for a visit to Mrs. Mason. The misunderstanding with Mary was over, and on June 21 Claire spent the day with her at the Baths. This was well; but her inability to execute Shelley's commission would oblige him to visit Florence, partly that he might report on houses to Horace Smith, partly to ascertain whether it would be possible to procure a suitable winter residence, in his friend's neighbourhood, for Mary and himself. On July 29, Shelley left the Baths of Pisa, in company with Mr. and Mrs. Gisborne, who had been his guests, and who were now once again on their way to England; but his weary search for houses was not successful. Several, indeed, were marked down which might please Horace Smith; but it was less easy to find anything likely to suit his own modest requirements and his not overflowing purse.

"My dearest love," he wrote to Mary (August 1), "I shall not return this evening; nor, unless I have better success, to-morrow. I have seen many houses, but very few within the compass of our powers; and even in those which suit, nothing is more difficult than to bring the proprietors to terms." There was a deliverance from the weariness and vexations of his task in long contemplation of the colossal Niobe in the Uffizi, her countenance "the consummation of feminine majesty and loveliness, beyond which the imagination scarcely doubts that it can conceive anything." "I grudge my sequins

for a carriage," the letter to Mary ended; "but I have suffered from the sun and the fatigue, and dare not expose myself to that which is necessary for house-hunting. Kiss little Babe, and how is he? but I hope to see him fast asleep to-morrow night. And pray, dearest Mary, have some of your novel prepared for my return.—Your ever affectionate SHELLEY."

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1821.

On August 2, Shelley was again at home, but on that same day arrived a letter from Byron, earnestly requesting that he might see him at Ravenna. The Countess Guiccioli's father and brother had lately been expelled on political grounds from the Romagna, and she herself had fled to Florence. We cannot doubt that Byron's letter informed Shelley of his own approaching departure from Ravenna, and it is natural to suppose that Shelley's thoughts would turn to his former favourite, Allegra, now in the convent at Bagnacavallo. Byron's purpose was to seek a shelter with the Gambas and the countess in Switzerland, and on July 23 he wrote to Hentsch, the Genevan banker, desiring him to engage a house for himself on the Jura side of the Lake of Geneva, and another in the same neighbourhood for the family of the Gambas. At that time Byron intended to remove Allegra from the convent, and take her with him to Switzerland. But before the close of July either his intention was altered, or he had not thought well to inform Shelley of his plans.\* Although Shelley and Mary approved of Byron's action in placing Allegra in a convent, where her father from a distance of a few miles might visit her at his pleasure, they could not but feel that the position of the child would be different when her father should be away beyond the Alps. With neither parent to watch over her, or be present with her in case of illness, what might not be Allegra's fate? Shelley's birthday was at hand, but Mary must spend it alone, or with Mr. and Mrs. Williams. Not a day was to be lost. Claire had gone for sea-air and bathing

\* For Shelley tells Mary that he himself had persuaded Byron to take Allegra to Switzerland.



CHAP. X. to Leghorn, and Shelley would see her and consult with her  
 May-Oct. after leaving home; then with such speed as was possible he  
 1821. would press forward to Ravenna. Edward Williams had been for some time engaged upon a miniature of Mary, perhaps designed for Shelley's birthday gift, and which, in fact, a few days later became his; but birthday gifts must wait until business of such urgency had been despatched.

*Mary Shelley's Journal.*

"*Tuesday, August 2.*—Williams. Shelley returns [*i.e.* from Florence]. A letter with news. Jane [Williams] comes to dinner.

"*Friday, August 3.*—Williams. Shelley dines at Pisa. After dinner go to Casa Silva [Mrs. Mason's house]. Shelley departs.

"*Saturday, August 4.*—Williams all day. Read Homer. Walk. Call on Madame Tantini. Williams finishes my miniature. Shelley's birthday. Seven years are now gone; what changes! What a life! We now appear tranquil; yet who knows what wind—but I will not prognosticate evil; we have had enough of it. When Shelley came to Italy, I said all is well if it were permanent; it was more passing than an Italian twilight. I now say the same. May it be a Polar day; yet that day, too, has an end."

"Shelley's birthday," Claire writes in her journal. "Rise at five. Row in the harbour with Shelley. Then call upon the Countess Tolomei. Then we sail out into the sea. A very fine warm day; the white sails of ships upon the horizon looked like doves stooping over the water."

On the morning of August 6 Shelley was at Bologna. "Dearest mine," he wrote to Mary, "... though I have travelled all night at the rate of two miles and a half an hour, in a little open calesso, I am perfectly well in health. One would think that I were the spaniel of Destiny, for the more

she knocks me about the more I fawn on her. We had an CHAP. X.  
May-Oct.  
1821. overturn about daybreak; the old horse stumbled, and threw me and the fat vetturino into a slope of meadow, over a hedge. My angular figure stuck where it was pitched; but my vetturino's spherical form rolled fairly to the bottom of the hill, and that with so few symptoms of reluctance in the life which animated it, that my ridicule (for it was the drollest sight in the world) was suppressed by my fear that the poor devil had been hurt. But he was very well, and we continued our journey with great success. . . . My love to the Williamsses. Kiss my pretty one, and accept an affectionate one for yourself from me. The chaise waits. I will write the first night from Ravenna at length."

At ten o'clock, on the night of August 7, Shelley reached Ravenna, and was received by Lord Byron at the Guiccioli Palace. The hours of that night went by in endless converse, and dawn was in the sky before the pair retired to rest. Politics, poetry, personal affairs, were discussed. Lord Byron seemed to Shelley to be "greatly improved in every respect—in genius, in temper, in moral views, in health, in happiness." His attachment to the Countess Guiccioli had rescued him from the coarse and reckless libertinage of the evil days at Venice, and in the phrase of Shelley, whose respect for the marriage bond as such was slight, he was becoming "a virtuous man." "Poor fellow!" Shelley wrote on the morning after his arrival, "he is now quite well, and immersed in politics and literature. . . . We talked a great deal of poetry and such matters last night, and, as usual, differed, and I think more than ever. He affects to patronize a system of criticism fit for the production of mediocrity, and although all his fine poems and passages have been produced in defiance of this system, yet I recognize the pernicious effects of it in the 'Doge of Venice;' and it will cramp and limit his future efforts, however great they may be, unless he gets rid of it. I have read only parts of it, or rather he

CHAP. X. himself read them to me, and gave me the plan of the whole."  
May-Oct.  
1821.

With such talk on impersonal topics Shelley's letter endeavoured to set Mary's heart at ease as to her husband's present temper, before it introduced a subject of painful interest, which must shock her moral sense and agitate her feelings. Slander and calumny had long been familiar to Shelley and Mary. Their irregular union, and their rash conduct in the early days, had not alone subjected them to such censure as was natural and just, but had in a peculiar degree exposed them to the aspersions of base and malicious tongues. When in 1814 they fled to the Continent, accompanied by Claire Clairmont, and when, soon after, Godwin was rescued from his distress by Shelley's generosity, it was given out that Shelley had purchased of Godwin his two daughters for sums of eight hundred and seven hundred pounds respectively. When, through the consideration of Shelley and Mary for Claire in her difficult position, she became an inmate of their house at Marlow, the gossips rightly conjectured that Allegra was Miss Clairmont's child. Who, then, could be the child's father except Shelley? These were slanders of old date, and though the *Literary Gazette*, in its article on "Queen Mab," had revived the charges in language of outrageous violence, it did not distinctly specify any new series of horrible crimes which should be laid at Shelley's door. In the spring of 1820, the rascal Paolo Foggi had attempted to extort money from Shelley by threatening to charge him with hideous misdoings; but the affair had been placed in a lawyer's hands, and Paolo, it was believed, had been crushed. Shelley had not spent many hours in the Palazzo Guiccioli before he learnt from Byron that Paolo and Elise had been to work against him with Mr. and Mrs. Hoppner, and not without success.

*Shelley to Mary Shelley.*

CHAP. X.

Ravenna, August 7, 1821.

May—Oct.  
1821.

\* \* \* \* \*

Lord Byron has also told me of a circumstance that shocks me exceedingly, because it exhibits a degree of desperate and wicked malice, for which I am at a loss to account. When I hear such things, my patience and my philosophy are put to a severe proof, whilst I refrain from seeking out some obscure hiding-place, where the countenance of man may never meet me more. It seems that *Elise*, actuated either by some inconceivable malice for our dismissing her, or bribed by my enemies, or making common cause with her infamous husband, has persuaded the Hoppners of a story so monstrous and incredible that they must have been prone to believe any evil to have believed such assertions upon such evidence. Mr. Hoppner wrote to Lord Byron to state this story as the reason why he declined any further communications with us, and why he advised him to do the same. *Elise* says that *Claire* was my mistress; that is very well, and so far there is nothing new; all the world has heard so much, and people may believe or not believe as they think good. She then proceeds to say that *Claire* was with child by me; that I gave her the most violent medicine to procure abortion; that this not succeeding she was brought to bed, and that I immediately tore the child from her and sent it to the Foundling Hospital—I quote Mr. Hoppner's words—and this is stated to have taken place in the winter after we left Este. In addition, she says that both I and *Claire* treated *you* in the most shameful manner; that I neglected and beat you, and that *Claire* never let a day pass without offering you insults of the most violent kind, in which she was abetted by me.

As to what Reviews and the world says, I do not care a jot, but when persons who have known me are capable of conceiving of me—not that I have fallen into a great error, as would have been the living with *Claire* as my mistress—but that I have committed such unutterable crimes as destroying or abandoning a child, and that my own! Imagine my despair of good! imagine how it is possible that one of so weak and sensitive a nature as mine can run further the gauntlet through this hellish society of men! *You* should write to the Hoppners a letter refuting the charge, in case you believe, and know, and can prove that it is false, stating the grounds and proofs of your belief. I need not dictate what you

CHAP. X. should say, nor, I hope, inspire you with warmth to rebut a charge  
 May-Oct. which you only can effectually rebut. If you will send the letter  
 1821. to me here, I will forward it to the Hoppners. Lord Byron is not  
 up. I do not know the Hoppners' address, and I am anxious not  
 to lose a post.

*Shelley to Mary Shelley.*

[Ravenna, Thursday, August 9, 1821.]

MY DEAREST MARY,

I wrote to you yesterday, and I begin another letter to-day, without knowing exactly when I can send it, as I am told the post only goes once a week. I dare say the subject of the latter half of my letter gave you pain, but it was necessary to look the affair in the face, and the only satisfactory answer to the calumny must be given by you, and could be given by you alone. This is evidently the source of the violent denunciations of the *Literary Gazette*, in themselves contemptible enough, and only to be regarded as effects which show us their cause, which, until we put off our mortal nature, we never can despise—that is, the belief of persons who have known and seen you that you are guilty of the most enormous crimes. A certain degree and a certain kind of infamy is to be borne, and, in fact, is the best compliment which an exalted nature can receive from the filthy world, of which it is its hell to be a part; but this sort of thing exceeds the measure; and even if it were only for the sake of our dear Percy, I would take some pains to suppress it. In fact, it shall be suppressed, even if I am driven to the disagreeable necessity of prosecuting Elise before the Tuscan tribunals.

“It was necessary to look the affair in the face”—necessary for Shelley in 1821; necessary, since attention has been already directed to the matter, for Shelley's biographer to-day. And, indeed, good is brought out of evil. The happiness is great to witness how all these foul and shameful things are burnt away for ever by the clear flame of a woman's indignant love.

*Mary Shelley to Shelley (enclosing a letter to Mrs. Hoppner).*

MY DEAR SHELLEY,

Shocked beyond all measure as I was, I instantly wrote the enclosed. If the task be not too dreadful, pray copy it for me. I cannot.

Read that part of your letter which contains the accusation. I CHAP. X.  
 tried, but I could not write it. I think I could as soon have died. May-Oct.  
 I send also Elise's last letter: enclose it or not as you think best. 1821.

I wrote to you with far different feelings last night, beloved friend. Our barque is indeed "tempest-tost;" but love me, as you have ever done, and God preserve my child to me, and our enemies shall not be too much for us. Consider well if Florence be a fit residence for us. I love, I own, to face danger; but I would not be imprudent.

Pray get my letter to Mrs. Hoppner copied for a thousand reasons. Adieu, dearest! Take care of yourself—all yet is well. The shock for me is over, and I now despise the slander; but it must not pass uncontradicted. I sincerely thank Lord Byron for his kind unbelief.

Affectionately yours,

M. W. S.

Friday.

Do not think me imprudent in mentioning Claire's illness at Naples. It is well to meet facts. They are as cunning as wicked. I have read over my letter; it is written in haste; but it were as well that the first burst of feeling should be expressed. No letters.

*Mary Shelley to Mrs. Hoppner.*

Pisa, August 10, 1821.

MY DEAR MRS. HOPPNER,

After a silence of nearly two years I address you again, and most bitterly do I regret the occasion on which I now write. Pardon me that I do not write in French; you understand English well, and I am too much impressed to shackle myself in a foreign language; even in my own my thoughts far outrun my pen, so that I can hardly form the letters. I write to defend him to whom I have the happiness to be united, whom I love and esteem beyond all living creatures, from the foulest calumnies; and to you I write this, who were so kind, and to Mr. Hoppner, to both of whom I indulged the pleasing idea that I have every reason to feel gratitude. This is indeed a painful task. Shelley is at present on a visit to Lord Byron at Ravenna, and I received a letter from him to-day, containing accounts that make my hand tremble so much that I can hardly hold the pen. It tells me that

CHAP. X. Elise wrote to you, relating the most hideous stories against him, and that you have believed them. Before I speak of these falsehoods, permit me to say a few words concerning this miserable girl. You well know that she formed an attachment with Paolo when we proceeded to Rome, and at Naples their marriage was talked of. We all tried to dissuade her; we knew Paolo to be a rascal, and we thought so well of her that we believed him to be unworthy of her. An accident led me to the knowledge that without marrying they had formed a connection. She was ill; we sent for a doctor, who said there was danger of a miscarriage. I would not throw the girl on the world without in some degree binding her to this man. We had them married at Sir R. A'Court's. She left us, turned Catholic at Rome, married him, and then went to Florence. After the disastrous death of my child we came to Tuscany. We have seen little of them, but we have had knowledge that Paolo has formed a scheme of extorting money from Shelley by false accusations. He has written him threatening letters, saying that he would be the ruin of him, etc. We placed them in the hands of a celebrated lawyer here, who has done what he can to silence him. Elise has never interfered in this, and indeed the other day I received a letter from her, entreating, with great professions of love, that I would send her money. I took no notice of this, but although I knew her to be in evil hands, I would not believe that she was wicked enough to join in his plans without proof. And now I come to her accusations, and I must indeed summon all my courage whilst I transcribe them, for tears will force their way, and how can it be otherwise? You knew Shelley, you saw his face, and could you believe them? Believe them only on the testimony of a girl whom you despised? I had hoped that such a thing was impossible, and that although strangers might believe the calumnies that this man propagated, that none who had ever seen my husband could for a moment credit them.

He says Claire was Shelley's mistress, that—— Upon my word, I solemnly assure you that I cannot write the words. I send you a part of Shelley's letter that you may see what I am now about to refute, but I had rather die than copy anything so vilely, so wickedly false, so beyond all imagination fiendish.

But that you should believe it! That my beloved Shelley should stand thus slandered in your minds—he, the gentlest and most humane of creatures—is more painful to me, oh! far more

painful than words can express. Need I say that the union CHAP. X.  
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1821. between my husband and myself has ever been undisturbed? Love caused our first imprudence—love, which, improved by esteem, a perfect trust one in the other, a confidence and affection which, visited as we have been by severe calamities (have we not lost two children?), has increased daily and knows no bounds. I will add that Claire has been separated from us for about a year. She lives with a respectable German family at Florence. The reasons for this were obvious: her connection with us made her manifest as the Miss Clairmont, the mother of Allegra; besides, we live much alone, she enters much into society there, and, solely occupied with the idea of the welfare of her child, she wished to appear such that she may not be thought in after-times to be unworthy of fulfilling the maternal duties. You ought to have paused before you tried to convince the father of her child of such unheard-of atrocities on her part. If his generosity and knowledge of the world had not made him reject the slander with the ridicule it deserved, what irretrievable mischief you would have occasioned her! Those who know me well believe my simple word—it is not long ago that my father said in a letter to me that he had never known me utter a falsehood—but you, easy as you have been to credit evil, who may be more deaf to truth—to you I swear by all that I hold sacred upon heaven and earth, by a vow which I should die to write if I affirmed a falsehood,—I swear by the life of my child, by my blessed beloved child, that I know the accusations to be false. But I have said enough to convince you, and are you not convinced? Are not my words the words of truth? Repair, I conjure you, the evil you have done by retracting your confidence in one so vile as Elise, and by writing to me that you now reject as false every circumstance of her infamous tale. You were kind to us, and I will never forget it; now I require justice. You must believe me, and do me, I solemnly entreat you, the justice to confess that you do so.

MARY W. SHELLEY.

I send this letter to Shelley at Ravenna, that he may see it, for although I ought, the subject is too odious to me to copy it. I wish also that Lord Byron should see it; he gave no credit to the tale, but it is as well that he should see how entirely fabulous it is.

If Mary, with Shelley's letter before her, asked herself, "What is Byron's attitude in this affair?" no other answer



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was possible than "the attitude of a friend, communicating to Shelley, whom he had invited to Ravenna and whom he was 'delighted to see,' a monstrous calumny in order that it might be met and contradicted." But, in fact, less than five months before the present time, Byron had used a portion of Paolo's hideous story as a reason to justify him to Mr. Hoppner for his disregard of Claire's petition against entrusting the education of her child to the sisters of an Italian convent. The Italian convent-educated women, Claire had pleaded, are ignorant and profligate, bad wives and most unnatural mothers. When forwarding Claire's letter to Mr. Hoppner, Byron appended a note: "D<sup>r</sup>. Hoppner,—The moral part of this letter upon the Italians, etc., comes with an excellent grace from the writer, now living with a *man* and his *wife*, and having planted a child in the Fl. Foundling, etc." He had promised Mr. Hoppner that the accusations should be concealed from Shelley. In the talk of the first night at Ravenna they were disclosed; and now Mr. Hoppner must learn that his secret had been betrayed, and that Byron had too readily accepted a cruel calumny against the woman whom he had wronged, and against an innocent friend. Such a humiliating position could not be agreeable to one of Byron's temper.

*Shelley to Mary Shelley.*

Thursday [August 16], Ravenna.

I have received your letter, with that to Mrs. Hoppner. I do not wonder, my dearest friend, that you should have been moved with the infernal accusation of Elise. I was at first, but speedily regained the indifference which the opinion of anything or anybody, except our own consciousness, amply merits, and day by day shall more receive from me. I have not recopied your letter; \*

\* Mrs. Shelley probably meant that Shelley should keep the copy himself; but as in her agitation, when writing to Mrs. Hoppner, she "could hardly form the letters," and her "hand trembled so much that she could hardly hold the pen," it is not surprising that Shelley should think that she was unwilling to expose such tokens of excitement to comparative strangers.

such a measure would destroy its authenticity, but have given it CHAP. X.  
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1821. to Lord Byron, who has engaged to send it with his own comments to the Hoppners. People do not hesitate, it seems, to make themselves panders and accomplices to slander, for the Hoppners had exacted from Lord Byron that these accusations should be concealed from *me*. Lord Byron is not a man to keep a secret, good or bad ; but in openly confessing that he has not done so, he must observe a certain delicacy, and therefore wishes to send the letter himself, and indeed this adds weight to your representations. Have you seen the article of the *Literary Gazette* on me? They evidently allude to some story of this kind. However cautious the Hoppners have been in preventing the calumniated person from asserting his justification, you know too much of the world not to be certain that this was the utmost limit of their caution. So much for nothing.

Mary's letter of vindication, entrusted to Byron under a pledge that he would forward it to the Hoppners, did not pass out of his hands, and was found among papers of his after his death. It remains with us, however, to effect Mary's purpose in a larger sense than she had conceived, and to witness against the baseness of the man who thought to spare his own vanity at the cost of the honour of his friend.\*

Having as far as possible dismissed from his mind the painful impressions left by Lord Byron's disclosure, Shelley occupied himself in visiting the antiquities of Ravenna. The melancholy waste left by the Adriatic in its retreat cast its spell on his imagination. He looked with a certain interest at the tomb of Theodoric and the mausoleum of Galla Placidia ; but for the beauty of its mosaics and symbolic sculptures—

\* To end this affair, it need only be added that Miss Clairmont met Elise Foggi at Florence in April, 1822, and accused her of having uttered these calumnies to Mrs. Hoppner ; whereupon Elise wrote (April 12), in exceedingly bad French, to Mary Shelley, denying that she had ever said anything to Mrs. Hoppner against either Mary, Claire, or Shelley. She enclosed a letter intended for Mrs. Hoppner, saying that she was extremely astonished to hear that Mrs. Hoppner had spoken or written to Byron "des horreurs contre Mademoiselle Clairmont." "Je puis déclarer avec le plus grand certitude," she adds, "que j'ai jamais rien veu dans la conduite de Mademoiselle qui pouvait autoriser le moindre remarque [?] pervers."

CHAP. X. the youthful Saviour beside the brazier of burning coals, the birds drinking from the fountain, the lamb standing on the Mount of Paradise—he had only a contemptuous glance; they were rude and tasteless, with scarcely a trace of the antique. “It seems to have been one of the first efforts of the Christian religion,” he observes, “to destroy the power of producing beauty in art.” But one tomb in Ravenna was sacred to Shelley—Dante’s tomb—and there he worshipped. At evening, Byron and he would ride through the sombre pine forest, “Ravenna’s immemorial wood,” in which the elder poet wrote, at the request of his mistress, to whom it is dedicated, “The Prophecy of Dante.” In some quiet spot a pumpkin would be set up as a mark for pistol-shooting; and Shelley observed with pleasure that, although having had less practice of late than Byron, he fell little short of his rival in exactness of aim.

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The way of life at the Palazzo Guiccioli was not to Shelley’s liking, but during a short visit he could accommodate himself to the habits of his host. “Lord Byron,” he wrote to Peacock, “gets up at two. I get up, quite contrary to my usual custom (but one must sleep or die, like Southey’s sea-snake in ‘Kehama’), at twelve. After breakfast we sit talking till six. From six till eight we gallop through the pine forests which divide Ravenna from the sea; we then come home and dine, and sit up gossiping till six in the morning. I don’t suppose this will kill me in a week or fortnight, but I shall not try it longer. Lord Byron’s establishment consists, besides servants, of ten horses, eight enormous dogs, three monkeys, five cats, an eagle, a crow, and a falcon; and all these, except the horses, walk about the house, which every now and then resounds with their unarbitrated quarrels as if they were the masters of it.” “After I have sealed my letter,” Shelley adds in a postscript, “I find that my enumeration of the animals in this Circæan Palace was defective, and that in a material point. I have just met on the grand staircase five peacocks, two guinea-hens, and an Egyptian

crane. I wonder who all these animals were, before they were changed into these shapes." Not the least striking of these wild creatures was Tita the Venetian, who acted as Shelley's valet—"a fine fellow with a prodigious black beard, and who has stabbed two or three people, and is one of the most good-natured-looking fellows I ever saw."

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The third, fourth, and fifth cantos of "Don Juan" were now about to be published, and with the fifth canto, which Byron read aloud, Shelley was astonished and delighted; every word seemed to him stamped with immortality. "I despair of rivalling Lord Byron, as well I may, and there is no other with whom it is worth contending." The marvellous ease and power of Byron's poetic style were acknowledged by Shelley; nor did he find in this fifth canto—that which tells of Juan's rejection of the advances of Gulbeyaz—"a word which the most rigid assertor of the dignity of human nature could desire to be cancelled. It fulfils, in a certain degree, what I have long preached of producing—something wholly new and relative to the age, and yet surpassingly beautiful." On the other hand, Shelley could not accept Byron's principles or approve his practice in the writing of dramatic poetry. Byron, for his part, spoke with enthusiasm of "Prometheus Unbound," pronounced an unfavourable judgment on the "Cenci," and said not a word of "Adonais." "Certainly," wrote Shelley, "if 'Marino Faliero' is a drama, the 'Cenci' is not."

The domineering force of Byron's genius produced in Shelley a painful sense of his own powerlessness to play a part in the world of literature. "I write nothing," he tells Peacock, "and probably shall write no more. It offends me to see my name classed among those who have no name. If I cannot be something better, I had rather be nothing. . . . My motive was never the infirm desire of fame; and if I should continue an author, I feel that I should desire it. The cup is justly given to one only of an age; indeed, participation would make

CHAP. X. it worthless ; and unfortunate they who seek it and find it  
 May-Oct. not." "The demon of mistrust and pride lurks between two  
 1821. persons in our situation," he wrote of Byron and himself, to Mary, "poisoning the freedom of our intercourse. This is a tax, and a heavy one, which we must pay for being human. I think the fault is not on my side, nor is it likely, I being the weaker." And to Leigh Hunt he complains of the "canker of aristocracy" which existed in the midst of "many generous and exalted qualities" in Byron's character, and which needed to be cut out. It is evident that a simple, cordial, and abiding friendship was impossible between two such men.

Yet for the time there was more of attraction than repulsion in Byron's presence. The Countess Guiccioli and her brother desired to leave Italy for some time, and settle in Switzerland. Byron, although he had so far yielded to their wishes as to order a house in the neighbourhood of Geneva, now inclined to seek a home in Tuscany or Lucca, and persuaded Shelley to write a letter to the countess in support of the Italian scheme. "It seems destined," says Shelley, "that I am always to have an active part in everybody's affairs whom I approach." Shelley's representations had the desired effect ; the countess yielded, and begged as a favour that Shelley would not leave Ravenna without "Milord." Florence, where his mistress now resided, was crowded with gossip-loving English. Byron was therefore disposed to fix on Pisa as his place of abode, where he would require a large and magnificent house unfurnished. The neighbourhood of Claire, and her close relations of friendship with Mrs. Mason, were perceived by Shelley to be a difficulty. "Gunpowder and fire," he writes to Mary, "ought to be kept at a respectable distance ;" but in every case something must be risked. It did not follow because Byron settled in Pisa that the plans entertained by Shelley and Mary of wintering in Florence need be changed ; the *pros* and *cons* should be well considered. "Judge," he writes to Mary—"I know you like the job—which scale is overbalanced."

And then as if a gust were blown back upon his senses from CHAP. X.  
the loathsome calumny credited by the Hoppners, "My greatest May-Oct.  
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content would be utterly to desert all human society. I would  
retire with you and our child to a solitary island in the sea  
and build a boat, and shut upon my retreat the floodgates of  
the world. I would read no reviews and talk with no authors.  
If I dared trust my imagination, it would tell me that there  
are one or two chosen companions beside yourself whom I  
should desire. But to this I would not listen—where two or  
three are gathered together, the devil is among them. And  
good, far more than evil impulses, love, far more than hatred,  
has been to me, except as you have been its object, the source  
of all sorts of mischief. So on this plan I would be *alone*, and  
would devote either to oblivion or to future generations, the  
overflowings of a mind which, timely withdrawn from the  
contagion, should be kept fit for no baser object. But this it  
does not appear that we shall do.

"The other side of the alternative (for a medium ought  
not to be adopted) is to form for ourselves a society of our  
own class, as much as possible, in intellect or in feelings; and  
to connect ourselves with the interests of that society. Our  
roots never struck so deeply as at Pisa, and the transplanted  
tree flourishes not. People who lead the lives that we led  
until last winter are like a family of Wahabee Arabs, pitching  
their tents in the midst of London. We must do one thing or  
the other—for yourself, for our child, for our existence. The  
calumnies, the sources of which are probably deeper than we  
perceive, have ultimately for object the depriving us of the  
means of security and subsistence. You will easily perceive  
the gradations by which calumny proceeds to pretext, pretext  
to persecution, and persecution to the ban of fire and water.  
It is for this, and not because this or that fool, or the whole  
court of fools, curse and rail, that calumny is worth refuting  
or chastising." With Lord Byron, the Williamses, and other  
friends in Pisa, Shelley believed that there would be a security

CHAP. X. and protection for him and those who were dear to him which  
 May-Oct. might not be had in Florence, where English visitors were  
 1821. numerous, and of a class little likely to be friendly to one  
 whose reputation in England was such as had been set forth  
 by the *Literary Gazette*.

But one thing seemed to Shelley of more urgent importance than even the consideration of plans for his own household. What was to be the fate of the solitary child in the convent of Bagnacavallo? "Our first thought," he wrote to Mary, "ought to be Allegra, our second our own plans." On the night of his arrival at Ravenna, Byron had spoken about his daughter. "Allegra, he says, is grown very beautiful," Shelley wrote to Mary, "but he complains that her temper is violent and imperious. He has no intention of leaving her in Italy; indeed, the thing is too improper in itself not to carry condemnation along with it. Contessa Guiccioli, he says, is very fond of her; indeed, I cannot see why she should not take care of it, if she is to live as his ostensible mistress. All this I shall know more of soon." Before the Swiss scheme had been abandoned, Shelley urged upon Byron the duty of taking Allegra with him, and represented to him the moral dangers of a convent education. "This was all settled," he writes to Mary; "and now, in the change of his plans to Tuscany, I wish to hold him to the same determination of taking her with him. But how can I do this if I have nothing in Tuscany to propose better than Bagnacavallo? His own house is manifestly unfit, and although no longer a theatre of Venetian excesses, is composed entirely of dissolute men-servants, who will do her nothing but mischief. So, then, any family, an English or Swiss establishment, any refuge, in short, except the Convent of St. Anna, where Allegra might be placed. Do you think Mrs. Mason could be prevailed upon to *propose* to take charge of her? I fear not. Think of this against I come. If you can now see or write to Emilia, ask her if she knows any one who would be fit for this purpose. But the

circumstance that most presses is to find a maid to attend her from Ravenna to Pisa, and to take charge of her until some better place than his own house shall be found for her—some person less odious and unfit, if possible, than the Italian woman whom he seems to have fallen upon.”

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“She was a lovely child,” wrote Miss Clairmont of Allegra, “with a delicate yet bright colour in her cheek, with eyes of a deep blue, a skin as fair as alabaster, golden curly hair, and a countenance full of animation and all the soft, sparkling witchery of early childhood. There is not a father in the whole world who would not have been captivated by the pure brightness of this fairy child, who would not have cherished her too fondly, who would not have made of her infancy a sweet idyl of flowers and innocent joys.”

Our latest picture of Allegra is that drawn by Shelley in the letter (August 15) to Mary which contains his anxious inquiries as to where she should be placed when conducted to Pisa. “I went the other day to see Allegra at her convent, and stayed with her about three hours. She is grown tall and slight for her age, and her face is somewhat altered. The traits have become more delicate, and she is much paler, probably from the effect of improper food. She yet retains the beauty of her deep blue eyes and of her mouth, but she has a contemplative seriousness, which, mixed with her excessive vivacity, which has not yet deserted her, has a very peculiar effect in a child. She is under very strict discipline, as may be observed from the immediate obedience she accords to the will of her attendants. This seems contrary to her nature, but I do not think it has been obtained at the expense of much severity. Her hair, scarcely darker than it was, is beautifully profuse, and hangs in large curls on her neck. She was prettily dressed in white muslin, and an apron of black silk, with trousers. Her light and airy figure and her graceful motions were a striking contrast to the other children there. She seemed a thing of



CHAP. X. a finer and a higher order. At first she was very shy, but  
 May-Oct. 1821. after a little caressing, and especially after I had given her a gold chain which I had bought at Ravenna for her, she grew more familiar, and led me all over the garden, and all over the convent, running and skipping so fast that I could hardly keep up with her. She showed me her little bed and the chair where she sat at dinner, and the carozzina in which she and her favourite companions drew each other along a walk in the garden. I had brought her a basket of sweetmeats, and before eating any of them she gave her companions and all the nuns a portion. This is not much like the old Allegra. I asked her what I should say from her to her mamma, and she said—

“ ‘Che mi manda un bacio e un bel vestituro.’

“ ‘E come vuoi il vestituro sia fatto?’

“ ‘Tutto di seta e d’oro,’ was her reply.

“ Her predominant foible seems the love of distinction and vanity, and this is a plant which produces good or evil according to the gardener’s skill. I then asked her what I should say to papa? ‘Che venga farmi un visitino e che porta seco la *mammina*,’ a message which you may conjecture that I was too discreet to deliver. Before I went away, she made me run all over the convent like a mad thing. The nuns, who were half in bed, were ordered to hide themselves, and on returning Allegra began ringing the bell which calls the nuns to assemble. The tocsin of the convent sounded, and it required all the efforts of the prioress to prevent the spouses of God to render themselves, dressed or undressed, to the accustomed signal. Nobody scolded her for these *scappature*, so I suppose that she is well treated as far as temper is concerned. Her intellect is not much cultivated. She knows certain *orazioni* by heart, and talks and *dreams* of Paradise and angels and all sorts of things, and has a prodigious list of saints, and is always talking of the Bambino. This will do her no harm, but the idea of bringing up so sweet a creature in the midst of such trash till sixteen!”

The Countess Guiccioli's request that Shelley should not leave Ravenna without Byron received a courteous reply, but his chivalry did not oblige him to comply with her wishes to the letter. It was probably on August 17 that, resisting the importunity of his host, who desired him to prolong the visit, he left the Palazzo Guiccioli, and saw Ravenna sink in the distance amid its forest and marshes. But before leaving he had received Mary's promise of the gift of her miniature, which Williams had finished on Shelley's birthday. "My dearest love," he wrote, "I accept your kind present of your picture, and wish you would get it prettily framed for me. I will wear, for your sake, upon my heart this image which is ever present to my mind." The visit to Ravenna, although he suffered horrible pains at first, which he attributed to the water of the place, had served his health. "My spirits," he told Mary, "are much improved; they had been improving, indeed, before I left the Baths, after the deep dejection of the spring." In a few days he was in possession of Mary's gift, and was restored to his home of love under the olive and chestnut woods of the Baths of Pisa.

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Byron lingered at Ravenna; but before the end of August the Countess Guiccioli and her father were in Pisa, and had made Mary's acquaintance. "La Guiccioli," Shelley wrote to Mr. Gisborne, some two months later, while she still waited impatiently for Byron—"La Guiccioli . . . is a very pretty, sentimental, innocent Italian, who has sacrificed an immense fortune for the sake of Lord Byron, and who, if I know anything of my friend, of her, and of human nature, will hereafter have plenty of opportunity to repent her rashness." The Lanfranchi Palace, the stateliest on the Lung' Arno, said to have been built in parts after the design of Michael Angelo, had been taken for Byron by Shelley. Some days passed before he could decide between the rival attractions of Florence and Pisa as a place of residence for himself and his household during the coming winter. But if any doubt remained, it was

CHAP. X. removed by a letter from Horace Smith, informing him of  
 May-Oct. the continued illness of Mrs. Smith, which made her fear to  
 1821. encounter the Italian sun; they had therefore abandoned their  
 intention of visiting Florence, and were now taking a house  
 at Versailles. "Florence," Shelley wrote in reply, "will no  
 longer have any attractions for me this winter, and I shall  
 contentedly sit down in this humdrum Pisa, and refer to hope  
 and to chance the pleasure I had expected from your society  
 this winter." His graceful dream of the solitary island, with  
 only Mary and his boy to inhabit it with himself, had melted  
 into thin air. Yet it was not until he had made one effort to  
 escape from the world which of late had done him grievous  
 wrong, that he resigned himself to the inevitable. In Septem-  
 ber, he wrote to inquire of Peacock, now a clerk in the East  
 India Company's service, whether there were any prospect or  
 possibility of his obtaining a diplomatic appointment at the  
 court of some native prince. Peacock's answer, that such  
 employment was reserved for the regular servants of the  
 Company, speedily put an end to Shelley's idle hopes. About  
 this time he thought of writing a drama on the fable of Timon  
 of Athens adapted to our modern days.\* But the young heir  
 of the Shelley baronetcy, who had lavished his means in acts  
 of generosity not always prudent and well considered, and who  
 was now assailed by his countrymen with the most infamous  
 and calumnious accusations, did not intend to re-enact in his  
 own person the story of the Athenian misanthrope. He would  
 settle down in humdrum Pisa, with his wife and child, if  
 possible in the midst of a little circle of loyal friends; and at  
 this moment he was full of plans for bringing back health and  
 hope to one of these friends whose stock of both had run very  
 low, and who was already among those for whom his re-  
 sources had been most heavily taxed.

Since the autumn of 1820 Leigh Hunt had been seriously  
 ill; during many weeks he ceased to write for the *Examiner*,

\* Williams mentions this in his journal, December 30, 1821.

and hinted that he must give up even the *Indicator*.\* In CHAP. X.  
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1821. January, 1821, Mrs. Hunt, almost in despair, wrote to Mary Shelley, entreating that her husband, herself, and her children might all be transplanted perforce to Italy. "Ask Mr. Shelley, my dear Mrs. Shelley, to *urge it to him*. . . . Surely we might sell all our furniture and come over to you." Their circumstances were indeed full of difficulty—the principal writer for the *Examiner*, which was their chief means of support, disabled by illness; his brother, the proprietor, in prison, undergoing the penalty for rash speaking in his journal;† some of the children exchanging the discomfort of measles for the acuter misery of scarlet fever; little Mary, the gayest of the gay, moaning in the anguish of rheumatism; the baby given over in convulsions; Mrs. Hunt hardly allowing herself time to wipe her eyes, and followed from room to room by her ghost of a husband. The invitation of Shelley was a gleam of sunshine in this gloom. But now, in such a state of things, how was it possible to move? "God bless you," Hunt wrote in July, "ye two oceanic personages, Conchiglioso and Marina. I long to come over the sea to you, in spite of my weary wings; but it cannot be." The number of subscribers to the *Examiner* had fallen very low, but by August, Hunt, feeble as he was, had resumed work, and his return to its pages had brought back some hundreds of readers. During Shelley's visit to Ravenna he heard from Byron of the gift of his "Memoirs" to Moore, and of Murray's purchase of the manuscript for two thousand pounds. Shelley's instant thought was for his friend in England, poor and ailing, and of the power which Byron possessed to lighten his burden of distress. But Byron was not a man of whom he could ask a pecuniary favour, even on behalf of a common friend. Something better, as it seemed, than a gift of money was the outcome of his conferences with

\* Which he did, a little later.

† John Hunt's offence, for which he was sentenced to a year's imprisonment, was a description of the House of Commons as consisting in the main of public criminals rather than public guardians.

CHAP. X. Byron. In February, 1819, Shelley had a notion that a review might be started under Peacock's management, which should bring together in mutual service the advocates in England of the Liberal cause, as the *Quarterly Review* had served as a centre—so Shelley conceived—to the supporters of obscurantism. "If a band of staunch reformers," he wrote, "resolute yet skilful infidels, were united in so close and constant a league as that in which interest and fanaticism have bound the members of that literary coalition!" At Ravenna, it was proposed by Byron that Leigh Hunt should come to Italy, and go shares with himself and Shelley in a periodical, in which each of the contracting parties should publish all their original compositions.\* The profits, which must be considerable, should be shared between them. Shelley did not choose to shackle himself in the free expression of his opinions by partnership with others who might suffer on his account, and his pride or sense of self-respect forbade him, who as an independent writer had never obtained a hold upon the public, from seeking to shine with a borrowed splendour and sharing profits which he had not contributed to earn. But it was otherwise with Hunt; he had already a large circle of admirers, and had long been prominent as a Liberal journalist. Shelley wrote accordingly from Pisa to his friend, informing him of Byron's proposal, and urging his immediate departure from England. Hunt's spirits, easily set dancing, now leaped with pleasure, and the blood ran lightly through his veins. Yes, they would all set off; they had already discussed it with the Gisbornes, and all day long their talk was of nothing but beef, salad oil, and Italian education; he would himself raise money for the voyage with an impudent certainty that Shelley would help him out with the payment of it. Italy! Italy! Italy! Italy! "We will divide the world between us," wrote

\* On December 25, 1820, Byron had written from Ravenna to Moore, proposing that, if they both got to London again, they should set up a newspaper "weekly or so," in which literature should have a place as well as politics.

Hunt, "like the Triumvirate, and you shall be the sleeping partner, if you will; only it shall be with a Cleopatra, and your dreams shall be worth the giving of kingdoms." With little hope that his letter would reach England before the travellers had sailed, Shelley addressed Hunt on October 6, sending first a hearty welcome and thanks, with love and anxious wishes for the companions of his journey; then adding some words of practical advice, in which details concerning linen, and knives and forks and spoons, were not forgotten. "Hogg," he writes, "will be inconsolable at your departure. I wish you could bring him with you; he will say that I am like Lucifer, who has seduced the third part of the starry flock."

CHAP. X.  
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In the early days of September, just when Leigh Hunt heard the good news which brought him to Italy, Shelley with Mary started on a holiday excursion northwards to the coast, desiring to ascertain whether it would be feasible to spend a summer at Spezzia. The relations between Mary and Claire had been cordial of late, so Claire also was of the party. A faint chill touches our spirits when we see in Mary's journal for the first time the name of the place of doom. . "Saturday, September 8.—Journey to Spezzia. Dine on the road under the trees. Arrive at La Spezzia." But the September days were bright, and after sunset the glory of the moon was on the sea; the bay on which they rowed or sailed was lovely to enchantment, with its hills of vine and olive and chestnut, and villages nestling under the cliffs. And as they returned they lingered under the old castle at Massa, and saw the grey peaks of the marble-quarried hills of Carrara under the magic of the moonlight. On the day of their arrival at the Baths the weather broke, but they pushed on to Pugnano to tell Edward and Jane Williams the story of their happy wanderings.

Mary had indeed earned her holiday, for she had worked diligently upon her historical romance, and now it was com-

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plete. Her first reader was her husband, and his delight in her work was unbounded. It seemed to him to be at once "a living and moving picture of an age almost forgotten," a profound study of the passions of human nature, and an original creation of human character. He hoped that Ollier might purchase the copyright of the book, and endeavoured by letter, and afterwards through the agency of Mr. Gisborne, to negotiate the affair; but Ollier proved unpersuadable. Finally Godwin took the matter in hand, and succeeded in obtaining for the manuscript the sum of four hundred pounds, which Mary, with characteristic piety, devoted to relieving her father's necessities. Shelley had not the happiness of seeing Mary's most laborious and ambitious work given to the public. "Castruccio, Prince of Lucca," renamed on publication "Valperga," did not appear until 1823.

"I am full of thoughts and plans," Shelley wrote to Leigh Hunt in August, "and should do something if the feeble and irritable frame which encloses it was willing to obey the spirit." Of the larger designs which occupied his imagination, he did not achieve one; but a sudden inspiration in the late summer or early autumn of 1821 produced a work remarkable as a poet's vision of contemporary events, and a prophecy arising out of that vision. Interested in the cause of Greece, not only on general grounds, but because their friend, Prince Mavrocordato, was a chief actor in the great drama, Shelley and Mary read eagerly the newspaper reports of the progress of the war. In Shelley's lyrical drama the actual occurrences are idealized; a perspective is created for the imagination; the words of the snowy-bearded, glittering-eyed Ahasuerus—the immortal wanderer—sound strange indeed, yet hardly miraculous, amid the wonderful chants of the captive Greek women and the soft lullabies of the Indian slave. In the "Persæ" of Æschylus Shelley found a precedent, and to a considerable extent a model, for his poetic treatment of contemporary history; but the projected prologue to his drama,

of which a magnificent fragment was written, recalls rather CHAP. X.  
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1821. the opening of the Book of Job, or the prologue to Goethe's "Faust," than the play of Æschylus. The phantom of Mahomet the Second is a shadow cast on Shelley's drama from the greater figure of Darius in "The Persians;" in place of the ode of lamentation which closes the Greek play with foretelling of woe to Persia, Shelley ends with a lyrical prophecy of joy and peace and love for the wide earth:—

"The world's great age begins anew,  
The golden years return,  
The earth doth like a snake renew  
Her winter weeds outworn :  
Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam,  
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream."

He regarded his poem, not as a work of art like "Adonais," but as "a mere improvise," deriving its interest solely from the intense sympathy which he felt with the cause he would celebrate. "We are all Greeks," he wrote in the preface. "Our laws, our literature, our religion, our arts, have their root in Greece. But for Greece—Rome, the instructor, the conqueror, or the metropolis of our ancestors, would have spread no illumination with her arms, and we might still have been savages and idolaters; or, what is worse, might have arrived at such a stagnant and miserable state of social institution as China and Japan possess." Yet the poem can do homage also to that spirit of progress and love which, in the decline of the old world, was "to the Greeks foolishness." In relation to the worship which they superseded, even the popular notions of Christianity are represented by Shelley as true—true not absolutely, but relatively; and the character of Jesus Christ is recognized as that of a man most just, wise, and loving. Nor does the "Hellas" fail to acknowledge the "inextinguishable thirst" in human creatures for immortality; a thirst in which the poet found, "until better arguments can be produced than sophisms which disgrace the cause, the strongest and the only



CHAP. X. presumption that eternity is the inheritance of every thinking being." For his own part, Shelley could accept the mystery of the universe, and the mystery of his own life as a portion of it, with a serene assurance that whatever the meaning of all this might be, the meaning could not be ill. "What were the speculations which you say disturbed you?" he wrote to a friend. "My mind is at peace respecting nothing so much as the constitution, and mysteries of the great system of things—my curiosity on this point never amounts to solicitude."\* The "Hellas," accordingly, while making no concession to what Shelley regarded as Christian superstition, has in it an insight, a wise liberality, and a freedom from dogmatism very different from the somewhat narrow fanaticism of his earlier poems. The name of the drama was suggested by Edward Williams. In March, Shelley had ordered from London an engraved seal, having the device of a dove with outspread wings, and the motto round it—

*Μάντις εἴμ' ἐσθλῶν αγώνων—*

words taken from that chorus of the "Œdipus at Colonus," in which the old men, eager to know the issue of battle, long to gaze down on earth from a cloud like a swift-winged dove. The seal was perhaps intended for Alexander Mavrocordato, to whom also a Tassie gem, having on it the head of Alexander, ordered at the same time, was probably given. To Prince Mavrocordato the "Hellas" is dedicated in words of admiration and ardent sympathy, and the drama has for motto the same words from the "Œdipus at Colonus" chosen by Shelley as motto for the seal. The last stanza of the final chorus of the drama is a prayer that the brooding wings of the bird of peace—the dove, and not the eagle—"prophet of brave struggles," may soothe our weary world to rest.

\* To Medwin: Pisa, August 22, 1821.

## CHAPTER XI.

## WITH BYRON IN PISA.

THE dedication to "Hellas" is dated November 1. On that day Claire Clairmont was on her way back to Professor Bojti's at Florence; just before she entered the narrow streets of Empoli, Byron with his travelling train passed her on the road, as he drove forward to take possession of the Lanfranchi Palace.\* Five days earlier (October 25), Shelley and Mary had left the Baths, and entered the new apartment, which they had furnished for themselves, at the top of the Tre Palazzi di Chiesa on the Lung' Arno, just opposite Byron's prouder dwelling-place. Their rooms had the advantage of looking south over the country towards the sea, thus avoiding the bustle and ill odours of the town. Shelley, whose temperament was that of a salamander, loved the sun alike in winter and summer; and its vivifying rays expanded the buds and leaves of plants with which Mary made bright her sitting-room, and which still bloom and burgeon for us in the verses on the Zucca, and the description of the magic plant in that unfinished drama which has the enamoured enchantress for its heroine. Here in his pensive citadel he hoped to

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\* She had been on a visit to the Williamses at Pugnano. On Wednesday, October 31, she wrote to Mary, begging that she would get Mr. Williams to call for her at Casa Silva, after dark, and bring her to the Tre Palazzi. Perhaps she thought that Byron had already arrived, and she did not wish to be seen. "Shelley," she adds, "won't do to fetch me, because he looks singular in the streets."

CHAP. XI. gather his books about him—Calderon, Goethe, Kant, Plato, and the Greek dramatists; here he desired to “entrench” himself amid his studies “like a spider in his web.” Once again he felt the powerful attractions of Spinoza’s genius, and dictated to Williams (November 11–13) considerable fragments of a translation of the “*Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*,” which Shelley thought might be printed at Pisa, and to which Byron consented to lend his name. Nor was Mary, now that “Valperga” no longer occupied her, about to let the days pass in idleness. On November 29, she placed after the date in her journal a significant cross, and added the words, “I mark this day because I begin my Greek again, and that is a study which ever delights me. I do not feel the bore of it, as in learning another language; although it be so difficult, it so richly repays one; yet I read little, for I am not well.” Shelley became her tutor in Herodotus, an author who was new to her; in Homer she could now read alone. In the afternoons she drove with the Countess Guiccioli—“a nice pretty girl,” so Mary describes her, “without pretensions, good-hearted, and amiable,” who with her young brother, Pietro Gamba, was often an evening visitor at the Tre Palazzi. Sometimes, from the lower flat which they occupied in the same house, Edward and Jane Williams came upstairs, and Shelley would read aloud to them and Mary. Now the poem would be Byron’s “*Heaven and Earth*,” just completed, or his “*Vision of Judgment*,” read from the manuscript; now some piece of our elder literature—“*Chaucer’s Dream*,” or “*The Flower and the Leaf*.” In reading aloud, the soft vibrating tone of Shelley’s voice, “emphatic, pleasant, and persuasive,” acquired a “sustained song-like quality,” which came out more strongly when he recited verse.\* Or Medwin, who had returned to Pisa in the middle of November, or the “wise little gentleman” Taafe, would beguile the evening with small-talk of learning, literature, and personal gossip. Or on some

\* I have used the words of Thornton Hunt.

rare occasion Shelley, or Mary, or both together, would attend CHAP. XI.  
the entertainments of Mrs. Beauclerc, the gayest of English Oct. 1821-  
ladies in Pisa, whose seven daughters were now arriving at Apr. 1822.  
the age when, in Byron's phrase, they must waltz for their  
livelihood.\* Or Shelley's presence would be required at one  
of his lordship's weekly dinners at the Palazzo Lanfranchi,  
"when," he writes, "my nerves are generally shaken to pieces  
by sitting up contemplating, the rest making themselves vats  
of claret, etc., till three o'clock in the morning."† Social life  
in Pisa had its pains as well as its pleasures. The visits of  
Byron's London friends, with their town talk and men-of-the-  
world ways, was an affliction to Shelley, but he had the art of  
closing his senses in a great degree against their alien speech.  
"If Greece be free," Mary wrote (November 30), "Shelley and  
I have vowed to go, perhaps to settle there, in one of those  
beautiful islands where earth, ocean, and sky form the  
paradise." Meanwhile, for the discomfort of dances or weary  
dinners, there were compensations. Companionship with  
Byron seemed for a time, to Shelley and Mary, to be com-  
panionship, as it were, with a demiurge who could create  
rolling worlds at pleasure in the void of space. "Cain" had  
been for some months in the publisher's hands; "Heaven and  
Earth" succeeded "Cain" with the briefest interval. "What  
think you of Lord Byron now?" Shelley inquired of Mr.  
Gisborne (January 12, 1822). "Space wondered less at the  
swift and fair creations of God when he grew weary of vacancy,  
than I at the late works of this spirit of an angel in the mortal  
paradise of a decaying body. So I think—let the world envy,  
while it admires as it may."‡ And again, "What think you

\* Williams to Medwin, in Trelawny's "Records of Shelley," etc., vol. i. p. 17. Mrs. Beauclerc, says Medwin, was a neighbour of Shelley's family in Sussex. "She was a daughter of the Duchess of Leinster by her second marriage, and half-sister to Lord Edward Fitzgerald."

† To Horace Smith, January 25, 1822. But see the more agreeable account of Byron's dinners, quoted by Moore as if from Shelley, in his "Life of Byron," vol. v. p. 358.

‡ There can be little doubt that the sonnet to Byron, beginning "If I

CHAP. XI. of Lord Byron's last volume? In my opinion it contains finer poetry than has appeared in England since the publication of 'Paradise Regained.' 'Cain' is apocalyptic—it is a revelation not before communicated to man." Byron's love of banter, mystification, and cynicism but half sincere, often made his conversation wearisome; but with Shelley he would talk seriously and confidentially. Shelley's resolute yet gentle opposition to received opinions, his unshrinking yet amiable warfare with the world, amused Byron, and at the same time excited his admiration. Mephistopheles, in "Faust," calls the serpent who tempted Eve "my aunt, the renowned snake;" and Byron insisted that Shelley was one of her nephews walking about on the tip of his tail; "his bright eyes, slim figure, and noiseless movements, strengthened, if they did not suggest, the comparison."\* But if Byron smiled at the snake, he also recognized with a certain delight his frankness, courage, and hardihood of opinion. Moore had taken upon himself the duty of warning Byron against his intended coalition with Shelley and Hunt. "*Alone*," said Moore, "you may do anything; but partnerships in fame, like those in trade, make the strongest party answerable for the deficiencies or delinquencies of the rest; and I tremble, even for *you*, with such a bankrupt *Co.*" Byron's enemies could not be given a greater triumph, Moore declared, than by his forming such an unequal and unholy alliance. He feared that Shelley's influence would be exerted to render Byron more hostile than heretofore to established beliefs, and that even his writings would suffer through a loss of "the poetry of religion." Wonderful as "Cain" was, Moore regretted that Byron had written the poem, and he fancied that he could discern Shelley's ideas at work behind the verse. "To-day I had another letter warning me against the Snake," said Byron. "He alone, in this age of esteemed you less," etc., was written about the same time as this letter, and was suggested by the "Heaven and Earth" and "Vision of Judgment" following in rapid succession upon the "Cain."

\* Trelawny, "Records," etc., vol. i. p. 85.

humbug, dares stem the current, as he did to-day the flooded Arno in his skiff, although I could not observe he made any progress. The attempt is better than being swept along as all the rest are, with the filthy garbage scoured from its banks." \* Shelley saw in a moment that Moore had intervened partly at least through friendly zeal on behalf of Byron's genius and reputation. With perfect good breeding, modesty, and gentle temper (the words are those of Moore), he wrote to Horace Smith (April 11, 1822), "I think you know Moore. Pray assure him that I have not the smallest influence over Lord Byron in this particular [the subject of religion]; and if I had, I certainly should employ it to eradicate from his great mind the delusions of Christianity, which, in spite of his reason, seem perpetually to recur and to lay in ambush for the hours of sickness and distress. 'Cain' was *conceived* many years ago, and begun before I saw him last year at Ravenna. . . . How happy should I not be to attribute to myself, however indirectly, any participation in that immortal work!" He agreed with Moore that "the doctrines of the French and Material Philosophy are as false as they are pernicious;" still, he says, "they are better than Christianity, inasmuch as anarchy is better than despotism; for this reason, that the former is for a season, and that the latter is eternal. My admiration of the character, no less than of the genius, of Moore makes me rather wish that he should not have an ill opinion of me." Byron on his own part protested that his *dramatis personæ* uttered their own opinions and sentiments, not his. His belief was that people could never have enough of religion, if they are to have any; he himself inclined very much to the Catholic doctrines, but if he were to write a drama, he must make his characters speak in accordance with his conceptions of them. "As to poor Shelley," he goes on, in his letter to Moore, "who is another bugbear to you and the world, he is, to my knowledge, the *least* selfish and the

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\* Trelawny, "Records," etc., vol. i. p. 42.

CHAP. XI. mildest of men—a man who has made more sacrifices of his  
 Oct. 1821– fortune and feelings for others than any I ever heard of.  
 Apr. 1822. With his speculative opinions I have nothing in common, nor  
 desire to have.”

Shelley's contention now was not with the Founder of the Christian religion, but with historical Christianity, and on December 12, 1821, it seemed to him that he stood in presence of a signal example of the fatal spirit of fanaticism and cruelty which superstition engenders. While he and Mary were walking on that day with Edward and Jane Williams, a rumour reached them of a high crime and misdemeanour committed in the Infanta's duchy of Lucca, and of its intended punishment. The sacramental cup, or the wafer-box, had been sacrilegiously stolen from a church; the elements had been scattered about the church or spilt upon the road. Happily the culprit was now in the hands of justice, and it was decreed that on the morrow he should die at the stake. Shelley, Medwin, and Byron instantly held a council as to what measures should be taken to save the offender's life. Might they not ride next morning to Lucca, Shelley asked, rescue the prisoner, and hurry him away to the Tuscan frontier, where he might be safe? The English residents should sign a memorial to the Grand-Duke, who happened to be in Pisa, begging for his interposition; Lord Guilford might be moved to use his influence. Meanwhile, it would be prudent to make sure of their facts. With the morning came a report that matters were not so desperate as they had been represented. “I hear this morning,” Shelley wrote to Byron, “that the design, which certainly had been in contemplation, of burning my fellow-serpent has been abandoned, and that he has been condemned to the galleys.” But neither was this second rumour the truth. Taaffe, gallantly forgetful of a broken head testifying to the skill in horsemanship on which he prided himself, was off and away to Lucca, and when he returned with the true story, the excitement was at an end.

The criminal, a priest, had fled to Florence, where he had given himself up to the police. It had been decided that he should not be handed over to the authorities at Lucca except on condition that he were dealt with, not by Spanish law, but by the milder code of Tuscany. That Shelley's "fellow-serpent" should be scotched for an act of theft and impiety was not unreasonable.\*

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Companionship with Byron had made Shelley once more a rider, and the exercise on horseback had served his health. "He is not quite well," Mary wrote to Mrs. Gisborne in December, "but he is much better." When Medwin, who had not seen him since February, returned to Pisa in November, he found his cousin an altered man. "His health had sensibly improved, and he had shaken off much of that melancholy and depression to which he had been subject during the last year." Even in winter and wild weather his boat was to be seen at times breasting the current of the Arno. "Cloudy strong gales from the south," Williams writes in his journal of December 20. "Shelley and I sail furiously against the current for a considerable distance up the Arno. The storm, however, increasing, we reached the shore only just in time." But to a considerable extent during these winter months his horse stood him in stead of the canoe. He was, indeed, if Medwin witnesses truly, not a graceful rider; but neither did his companions witch the world with noble horsemanship. Byron ambled heavily upon his Flanders mare; and Taaffe was hardly more skilful in the management of a mortal steed than he was, as translator of Dante, in turning and winding a fiery Pegasus. When Byron first came to Pisa, he arranged with his friends to practise pistol-shooting in the garden of the Lanfranchi Palace; but all firing within the city walls was forbidden by the governor. After a while, a quiet spot, suitable for his

\* The facts are gathered from Mrs. Shelley's journal, Edward Williams's journal, Medwin's "Life of Shelley," and Moore's "Life of Byron."



CHAP. XI. purpose, was discovered in a vineyard to the east of the city, and thither Byron and his pistol club—Shelley, Williams, Medwin, Taaffe, Pietro Gamba—would ride in the afternoon. A half-crown placed in the slit of a cane, which was fixed in the ground, served often for a mark. Although his hand trembled, Byron was an excellent marksman. Shelley, whose hand, says Medwin, was all firmness, almost equalled him in accuracy of aim. "Lord Byron," writes Williams, recording in his journal the results of the shooting on December 2, "hit at the distance of fourteen yards the bull's-eye four times, and half-crown piece three. The last shot struck the piece of money so exactly in the centre that it was afterwards found with the ball enclosed within it, the sides being drawn to the centre like a three-cornered cocked hat." And next day "Shelley hits the half-crown twice." It is satisfactory to have evidence that the author of "The Sensitive Plant" showed no lack of steadiness of nerve and eye.

"Lord Byron is established here," Shelley wrote to Peacock in January, "and we are constant companions. No small relief this after the dreary solitude of the understanding and the imagination in which we past the first years of our expatriation, yoked to all sorts of miseries and discomforts. . . . Mary and Clara (who is not with us just at present) are well, and so is our little boy, the image of poor William. We live, as usual, tranquilly. I get up, or at least wake, early; read and write till two; dine; go to Lord Byron's, and ride, or play billiards, as the weather permits; and sacrifice the evening either to light books or whoever happens to drop in. Our furniture, which is very neat, cost fewer shillings than that at Marlow did pounds sterling; and our windows are full of plants, which turn the sunny weather into spring. My health is better—my cares are lighter; and although nothing will cure the consumption of my purse, yet it drags on a sort of life in death, very like its master, and seems, like Fortunatus's, always empty, yet never quite exhausted." Lighter cares,

better health, a tranquil life—Shelley did not often send to a friend such cheerful tidings of his state.

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But the mimosa mood also possessed him at times, when he would shrink from the touch of his fellows, and pine for an ideal tenderness of sympathy and love such as hardly belongs to this earth. It was in such a mood that he wrote the first of the two following letters to Claire Clairmont.

*Shelley to Claire Clairmont.*

Pisa, December 11, 1821.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

I should be very glad to receive a confidential letter from you—one totally the reverse of those I write to you—detailing all your present occupation and intimacies, and giving me some insight into your future plans. Do not think that my affection and anxiety for you ever cease, or that I ever love you less, although that love has been and still must be a source of disquietude to me.

The Exotic, as you are pleased to call me, droops in this frost—a frost both moral and physical—a solitude of the heart. These late days I have been unable to ride, the cold towards sunset is so excessive, and my side reminding me that I am mortal. Medwin rides almost constantly with Lord Byron, and the party sometimes consists of Gamba, Taaffe, Medwin, and the Exotic, who, unfortunately belonging to the order of mimosa, thrives ill in so large a society. I cannot endure the company of many persons, and the society of one is either great pleasure or great pain.

We expect the Hunts every day, but I suppose the tramontana is a great wind at sea, and detains them. I think I told you they are to live at Lord Byron's.

The news of the Greeks continues to be more and more glorious. It may be said that the Peloponnesus is entirely free, and Mavrocordato has been acting a distinguished part, and will probably fill a high rank in the magistracy of the infant republic.

What are you doing in German? I have read none since we met, nor probably until we meet again—should that ever be—shall I read it.

I am employed in nothing. I read, but I have no spirits for serious composition. I have no confidence, and to write in solitude or put forth thoughts without sympathy is unprofitable vanity.

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Tell me, dearest, what you mean to do, and if it should give you pleasure come and live with us. The Williamses always speak of you with praise and affection, and regret very much that you did not spend the winter with them; but neither their regret nor their affection equal mine.

Yours ever,

S.

*Shelley to Miss Clairmont.*

December 31, Pisa.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

I returned from Leghorn on Friday evening, but too late for the post, or you would have heard from me. The expected person had not arrived, having been detained by the tremendous weather. I hope soon to have more satisfactory intelligence. Your desires on this subject are the object of my anxious thought.

Mary desires me to say (not that she sees this letter or any of yours addressed to me) that she should have written to you but she has been very unwell. She has suffered terribly from the rheumatism in her head, to such a degree as for some successive nights entirely to deprive her of sleep. She is now, by dint of blisters and laudanum, somewhat better. I have suffered considerably from pain and depression of spirits. The weather has been frightful here. Torrents of rain have swollen the Arno to a greater degree than has been known for many years; the fury of the torrent is inconceivably great. The wind was beyond anything I ever remember, and all the shores of the Mediterranean are strewn with wrecks. The damage sustained at Genoa, and the number of lives lost, has been immense; the ships suspected of pestilence have been driven from their moorings into the town, and everything coming from Genoa has been subjected to a strict quarantine. Three mails from France are due, and a thousand contradictory rumours are afloat as to the cause. You may imagine, and I am sure you will share, our anxiety about poor Hunt. I wonder and am shocked at my own insensibility, that I can sleep or enjoy one moment of peace until I hear of his safety. I shall of course write to tell you the moment of his arrival. I know you will be anxious about these poor people. The ship in which they sail was spoken with in the Bay of Biscay, and was then quite safe. We have little new in politics. You will have heard of the amphibious state of things in France, and the establishment of the ultra ministry by the preponderance afforded to

that party by the coalition of the Liberals with it. The Greeks CHAP. XI.  
 are going on evidently, and those massacres at Smyrna and Con- Oct. 1821-  
 stantinople import nothing to the stability of the cause. There is Apr. 1822.  
 no such thing as a rebellion in Ireland, or anything that looks like  
 it. The people are indeed stung to madness by the oppression of  
 the Irish system, and there is no such thing as getting rents or  
 taxes even at the point of the bayonet throughout the southern  
 provinces. But there are no regular bodies of men in opposition  
 to the government, nor have the people any leaders. In England  
 all bears for the moment the aspect of a sleeping volcano.

You do not tell me, my dearest Claire, anything of your plans, although you bid me be secret with respect to them. Assure yourself, my best friend, that anything you seriously enjoin me that may be necessary for your happiness will be strictly observed by me. Write to me now explicitly your projects and expectations. You know in some respects my sentiments both with [regard] to them and you.

I have been once, after enduring much solicitation, to Mrs. Beaucherc's, who did me the favour to caress me exceedingly. Unless she calls on Mary, I shall not repeat my visit. Do you know her?

Should you take it into your head to call on Molini\* for me, let not Calderon having been sent for be an objection. I want a Calderon. Adieu.

Ever most faithfully yours,  
 S.

Mrs. Mason told me to say she did not write because I do.

The Mediterranean storms which strewed the coasts with wrecks did not endanger the lives of Leigh Hunt and his family. On November 15, they had embarked at Blackwall on board a small brig, in which, cooped in a cabin, narrow, chill, and dim, they endured some days of miserable tossing and tumbling about the Channel. The anxieties of a twelve-month had told on Mrs. Hunt, and when starting on the voyage she was alarmingly ill. It was a blessed respite when, their ship having cast anchor at Ramsgate, they secured quiet lodgings in the town, and slept in beds which did not rise and

\* A bookseller at Florence.

CHAP. XI. fall, and quiver and strain and creak. On December 11, Mrs. Hunt was carried down to the pier in a sedan, and they were soon all once more on board. But the winds seemed as if they had been commissioned by Lord Castlereagh to baffle the hopes of the sometime editor of the *Examiner*. By the end of the year the voyagers had got as far as Dartmouth, where parting from their hapless brig, they decided to proceed to Plymouth and there wait for a more favourable season. If they were lucky in their next vessel, said Hogg, writing in January, 1822, they might hope to spend next Christmas at Falmouth. Still it was better, he thought, than if they had attempted to reach Italy by a land journey, on which Hunt would surely stop to gather all the daisies by the way; not a daisy would be left by the roadside between Paris and Pisa.\* At the Palazzo Lanfranchi, the ground floor—clean and spacious rooms—had been set apart by Byron for Hunt's accommodation, and Mary Shelley had been busy buying furniture (for which Byron insisted on paying), and arranging it so that all might be neat and comfortable on her friends' arrival.

Before the close of January Shelley had heard that the Hunts were still in England, and it was evident that a large family could not subsist on the air, or on daisies of the roadside. "My dearest friend," Shelley wrote (January 25), "I send you by return of post £150, within 30 or 40 of what I had contrived to scrape together. How I am to assemble the constituents of such a sum again I do not at present see; but do not be disheartened—we will all put our shoulders to the wheel. Let me not speak of my own disappointment, which, great as it is at not seeing you here, is all swallowed up in sympathy with your present situation. Our anxiety during the continuance of the succession of tempests which one morning seemed to rain lightnings into Pisa, and amongst others struck the palace adjoining Lord Byron's, and turned

\* Hogg's words on Hunt's daisy-picking are reported to Mary Shelley by Mrs. Gisborne in a letter of April 28, 1822.

the Arno into a raging sea, was, as you may conceive, excessive, CHAP. XI. and our first relief was your letter from Ramsgate. Between Oct. 1821—  
Apr. 1822. the interval of that and your letter of December 28, we were in daily expectation of your arrival. Yesterday arrived that dated January 6." Shelley could not incur any obligation in the matter of money to Byron, nor place the burden of relieving the Hunts on his shoulders. Would it be possible, he asked Hunt, to find a publisher willing to purchase for £150 or £200 the copyright of the play of "Charles the First" on which he was now engaged? He had already given Ollier the refusal of the copyright of that poem; but his relations with his publisher were no longer those of a friend with a friend. "Should you not think it worth while to make any offer for it," he had written (January 11, 1822), "of course you will absolve me from levity in applying to another publisher. I ought to say that the tragedy promises to be good, as tragedies go, and that it is not coloured by the party spirit of the author. How far it may be popular I cannot judge."\* If

\* The letter in which these words occur is in possession of Mr. Frederickson, of New York, who has kindly given me a copy of it. Ollier had replied to none of Shelley's inquiries during six months, and I can discover nothing except this for which Ollier deserves blame. Shelley now wrote (January 11) to inform his publisher that Mrs. Shelley's novel was in Godwin's hands, and if he desired to publish the book, he might treat with Godwin. He expresses surprise that proof-sheets of "Hellas" had not come, nor any account of the effect produced by "Adonais"—Shelley did not know even whether "Adonais" had been published, "still less whether it has been republished with the alterations I sent." "Should you pay the same attention," Shelley concludes, "to my present letter as its late predecessors have received from you, you will scarcely think it extraordinary that this should be the last time I intend to trouble you." Next day (January 12), Shelley wrote to Mr. Gisborne, begging him to see Ollier's accounts, to inquire about his willingness to purchase the copyright of "Charles the First," and to discover whether he had printed and published "Hellas," and if not, to give it to some other publisher. He asks for four copies of each of his poems (to be sent by sea), and one copy of "Epipsychidion" (to be sent by post). "I am," he adds, "as all citizens of the world ought to be, especially curious respecting the article of money." On January 26, Shelley writes to Mr. Gisborne, begging his friend to "extract him from Ollier's clutches." He will have no more to do with Ollier on "whatever terms or for whatever apology," and would much rather his books were burnt than that they remained in Ollier's possession. A letter of Shelley's to Ollier of April 11, 1822, asks him to furnish Mr. Gisborne with a

CHAP. XI. Ollier should refuse, perhaps Hunt's bookseller, Allman, would make an offer. In any case, it was expedient that Hunt should hasten to Italy—"debts, responsibilities, and expenses will enmesh you round about if you delay, and force you back into that circle from which I made a push to draw you." Leigh Hunt's present debts in England, for which his brother John supposed that Shelley meant to make himself responsible, he could not undertake to pay; but for the expenses of the voyage Hunt might rely upon him. To linger and loiter must prove in every way inexpedient. Already Byron was faltering with respect to his project of the new quarterly—the *Hesperides* or the *Liberal*, whichever it should be named. Yet, while urging Hunt forward, Shelley added a prudent word of warning against leaving England until some means of support other than that to be derived from the projected quarterly had been secured. "Pray tell me in answer to this letter," he wrote, "what arrangement you have made about the receipt of a regular income from the profits of the *Examiner*. You ought not to leave England without having the assurance of an independence in this particular." Hunt's renewed entreaties that he should ask a loan of money from Byron, at length overcame Shelley's resistance. "Hunt had urged me more than once," he wrote to Byron (February 15, 1822), "to ask you to lend him this money. My answer consisted in sending him all I could spare, which I have now literally done." Shelley did not think that Hunt's promise to pay in a given time was worth very much; but he undertook to be himself responsible for any engagement which Hunt might have proposed to Byron. "I am so much annoyed by this subject that I hardly know what to write, and much less what to say; and I have need of all your indulgence in judging both my feelings

statement of accounts. "I understand from him that the balance [£50 or £60] is against me; I have reason to be surprised at this, but I complain of nothing except your silence, which has produced a want of intelligence between us, without which the accounts need never have been in their present state." A list of errata in the printed "*Hellas*" was sent by Shelley with this letter.

and expressions."\* More important, however, than any loan of money was Byron's disposition with reference to the project of the *Liberal*. Before the close of February, difficulties unconnected with Hunt had arisen, as we shall afterwards see, between Shelley and Byron; but Shelley's regard for the interests of his friend called forth whatever tact he possessed, and he succeeded in holding Byron to his original design, although manuscripts of the impatient poet were ready for publication and were eager to see the light. It was indeed, under difficult circumstances, a triumph of diplomacy. Byron now longed for Hunt's arrival in Italy, and expressed his disregard for the opinions of those who had warned him against the triple alliance. "I imagine," Shelley wrote to Hunt, "it will be no very difficult task to execute that which you have assigned me—to keep him in heart with the project until your arrival. . . . Particular circumstances, or rather, I should say, particular dispositions in Lord Byron's character, render the close and exclusive intimacy with him in which I find myself intolerable to me; thus much, my best friend, I will confess and confide to you. No feelings of my own shall injure or interfere with what is now nearest to them—your interest; and I will take care to preserve the little influence I may have over this Proteus in whom such strange extremes are reconciled until we meet—which we now must, at all events, soon do." Shelley might indeed say that he was watching over Hunt's interests with "the vigilance of painful affection"—with this, and also with a skill and discretion remarkable in one so impulsive and at times so outspoken.

The opening year had not brought Hunt to Pisa, but it added to the circle of Shelley's acquaintances one remarkable figure. Edward John Trelawny, the younger son of an officer in the army belonging to an old Cornish family, now in his twenty-ninth year,† had led a life of wandering and adventure

\* Byron lent £200, and took Shelley's bond for that sum.

† Trelawny was born in November, 1793.



CHAP. XI. by sea and land; he had gathered no great store of book-learning and was but half-educated from a scholarly point of view, but he had looked on life and the world with the eyes of a man of genius who was also a man of action. He viewed the conventional rules and proprieties of society with impatient scorn; the received opinions could take no hold upon his mind; every atom of his nature was alive with vivid life; he was a modern pagan, with generous instincts and a romantic imagination; and as picturesque in person as he was original in character. At Geneva he had heard of Shelley from Thomas Medwin—his inspired boyhood, his genius, his virtues, and sufferings. Now it was Trelawny's intention, in company with Edward Williams and an old naval friend, Captain Daniel Roberts, to hunt during the winter months in the wildest parts of the Maremma, and he had shipped his guns and dogs for Leghorn. From Genoa he had driven to Pisa to find Williams, and to form the acquaintance of Shelley and Byron, with whom he hoped to spend the following summer, boating in the Mediterranean. It was on January 14 that he arrived, and, having put up his horse and dined, he hastened to the Tre Palazzi on the Lung' Arno.

"The Williamses," he writes, in a well-known and delightful chapter of his "Recollections," "received me in their earnest cordial manner; we had a great deal to communicate to each other, and were in loud and animated conversation, when I was rather put out by observing in the passage near the open door, opposite to where I sat, a pair of glittering eyes steadily fixed on mine; it was too dark to make out whom they belonged to. With the acuteness of a woman, Mrs. Williams's eyes followed the direction of mine, and going to the doorway she laughingly said—

"'Come in, Shelley; it's only our friend Tre just arrived.'

"Swiftly gliding in, blushing like a girl, a tall thin stripling held out both his hands; and although I could hardly believe, as I looked at his flushed, feminine, and artless face, that it

could be the poet, I returned his warm pressure. After the ordinary greetings and courtesies he sat down and listened. I was silent with astonishment: was it possible this mild-looking, beardless boy could be the veritable monster at war with all the world? . . . I could not believe it; it must be a hoax. He was habited like a boy, in a black jacket and trousers, which he seemed to have outgrown, or his tailor, as is the custom, had most shamefully stinted him in his 'sizings.' Mrs. Williams saw my embarrassment, and to relieve me asked Shelley what book he had in his hand. His face brightened, and he answered briskly—

"'Calderon's "Magico Prodigioso." I am translating some passages of it.'

"'Oh, read it to us!'

"Shoved off from the shore of commonplace incidents that could not interest him, and fairly launched on a theme that did, he instantly became oblivious of everything but the book in his hand. The masterly manner in which he analyzed the genius of the author, his lucid interpretation of the story, and the ease with which he translated into our language the most subtle and imaginative passages of the Spanish poet, were marvellous, as was his command of the two languages. After this touch of his quality I no longer doubted his identity; a dead silence ensued; looking up I asked—

"'Where is he?'

"Mrs. Williams said, 'Who? Shelley? Oh, he comes and goes like a spirit, no one knows where or when.'

Trelawny, whom Hunt pictures "with his knight-errant aspect, dark, handsome, and mustachioed," interested Shelley and Mary more perhaps than any acquaintance whom they had made since Prince Mavrocordato sailed for Greece. "A kind of half-Arab Englishman," so Mary described him to Mrs. Gisborne, after some three weeks' intimacy, "whose life has been as changeful as that of Anastasius, and who recounts the adventures of his youth as eloquently and well as the

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CHAP. XI. imagined Greek. He is clever: for his moral qualities I am yet in the dark. He is a strange web which I am endeavouring to unravel. I would fain learn if generosity is united to impetuousness, nobility of spirit to his assumption of singularity and independence. He is six feet high; raven-black hair, which curls thickly and shortly like a Moor's; dark-grey expressive eyes; overhanging brows; upturned lips, and a smile which expresses good-nature and kind-heartedness. His shoulders are high, like an Oriental's; his voice is monotonous, yet emphatic; and his language, as he relates the events of his life, energetic and simple, whether the tale be one of blood and horror or of irresistible comedy. His company is delightful, for he excites me to think; and if any evil shade the intercourse, that time will unveil—the sun will rise or night darken all.” “Tired with the every-day sleepiness of human intercourse,” Mary had written in her journal a few days after Trelawny's arrival, “I am glad to meet with one who, among other valuable qualities, has the rare merit of interesting my imagination.”\* That he interested Shelley's imagination also is manifest from the idealized portrait of Trelawny which appears in the “Fragments of an Unfinished Drama” of the year 1822—a drama undertaken for the amusement of his little circle of Pisan friends. “An enchantress, living in one of the islands of the Indian Archipelago”—thus Mrs. Shelley gives in outline the plot of the play—“saves the life of a pirate, a man of savage but noble nature. She becomes enamoured of him; and he, inconstant to his mortal love, for a while returns her passion; but at length recalling the memory of her whom he left, and who laments his loss, he escapes from the enchanted island and returns to his lady. His mode of life makes him again go to sea, and the enchantress seizes the opportunity to bring him, by a spirit-brewed

\* These words from the journal follow a description of Trelawny having much in common with that quoted above. It is printed in “Shelley Memorials,” pp. 177, 178.

tempest, back to her island." The pirate of the enchanted isle is Trelawny, glorified by the poet's imagination—

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"He was as is the sun in his fierce youth,  
As terrible and lovely as a tempest."

But Shelley's romantic hero does not once appear in person in the few scenes which were written of this drama of fantasy.

While Trelawny thus became for Shelley's imagination a figure exalted by an element of romance, Shelley for his part engraved on Trelawny's brain and heart an image deep, clear-cut, and indelible. "There was a marked individuality," he writes, "in Shelley. In habits, manners, and all the ordinary occurrences of life, he never changed. He took no notice of what other people did; brave, frank, and outspoken, like a well-conditioned boy, well-bred and considerate for others, because he was totally devoid of selfishness and vanity." His bodily vigour seemed to Trelawny to be considerable, and his health far from fragile. "I often saw him in a state of nudity, and he always reminded me of a young Indian, strong-limbed and vigorous, and there were few men who would walk on broken ground at the pace he kept up; he beat us all in walking, and, barring drugs and accidents, he might have lived as long as his father—to ninety." In his face the most striking feature were the luminous eyes which had shone upon Trelawny from the dusk when he first visited the Tre Palazzi. "I caught sight of Shelley's bright eyes in the distance," says Trelawny; "I always recognized Shelley by his eyes." Yet these bright eyes were for ever poring upon books, and seemed rather to drink in light than dimness from the page of Plato, or Spinoza, or Calderon, or Goethe. "He set to work on a book, or a pyramid of books; his eyes glistening with an energy as fierce as that of the most sordid gold-digger who works at a rock of quartz, crushing his way through all impediments, no grain of the pure ore escaping his eager scrutiny. I called on him one morning at ten; he

CHAP. XI. was in his study, with a German folio open, resting on the broad marble mantelpiece, over an old-fashioned fireplace, and with a dictionary in his hand. He always read standing if possible. He had promised overnight to go with me, and now begged me to let him off. I then rode to Leghorn eleven or twelve miles distant, and passed the day there; on returning at six in the evening to dine with Mrs. Shelley and the Williamses, as I had engaged to do, I went into the poet's room, and found him exactly in the position in which I had left him in the morning, but looking pale and exhausted.

"'Well,' I said, 'have you found it?'"

"Shutting the book and going to the window, he replied, 'No, I have lost it:' with a deep sigh, 'I have lost a day.'

"'Cheer up, my lad, and come to dinner.'

"Putting his long fingers through his masses of wild, tangled hair, he answered faintly, 'You go; I have dined—late eating don't do for me.'

"'What is this?' I asked, as I was going out of the room, pointing to one of his bookshelves with a plate containing bread and cold meat on it.

"'That,'—colouring—'why, that must be my dinner. It's very foolish. I thought I had eaten it.'"

But Shelley was no bookworm; he read to find something; and he communicated the life which study had quickened within him. His mental activity, says Trelawny, was infectious; "he kept your brain in constant action." Though a lover of study and of solitude, he was social and cheerful. If Mary "threatened" him with a musical party, he might indeed pathetically plead to be let off; yet in society, if the fit of abstraction were not on him, he had perfect ease of manner, "omitting no occasion of obliging those whom he came in contact with, readily conversing with all or any who addressed him, irrespective of age or rank, dress or address." But if Shelley could be amiably pliant in matters indifferent, he was resolute and even stubborn when

he had fixed his will upon an object. "I always go on until CHAP. XI. I am stopped," he said, "and I never am stopped." He never Oct. 1821—  
Apr. 1822. wavered, declares Trelawny; he was unalterable.

Before Trelawny arrived at Pisa, he had been informed by Edward Williams of his own hope and Shelley's that the two households might form a party next summer at Spezzia. "Have a boat we must," Williams had written, "and if we can get Roberts to build her, so much the better." When, on the day after his arrival, Trelawny paid his second call at the Tre Palazzi, he brought with him the model of an American schooner, whereupon followed discussion of boats and boating, and before the friends parted it was settled that a boat thirty feet long should be built for Shelley and Williams, and a letter was written by Trelawny to Captain Roberts at Genoa to begin his ship-building at once. In her transcript of Williams's journal, Mrs. Shelley appends a note to the entry for January 15: "Thus on that night—one of gaiety and thoughtlessness—Jane's\* and my miserable destiny was decided. We then said, laughing each to the other, 'Our husbands decide without asking our consent, or having our concurrence; for, to tell you the truth, I hate this boat, though I say nothing.' Said Jane, 'So do I; but speaking would be useless, and only spoil their pleasure.' How well I remember that night! How short-sighted we are! And now that its anniversary is come and gone, methinks I cannot be the wretch I too truly am."

Three weeks later, on February 7, Shelley and Williams started for Spezzia to take houses for the summer colony—too large a colony, Mary feared, for unity, since Byron and the Countess Guiccioli, and Pietro Gamba, and Trelawny, and Captain Roberts were all to be of the party. The first divine spring days were now come, with clear sky, warm sun, the hedges budding; and though Mary stayed behind in Pisa, and heard the opera with Mrs. Williams, and, for a wonder,

\* Jane Williams.

CHAP. XI. attended Mrs. Beauclerc's ball with Trelawny,\* there were  
 Oct. 1821- longings astir within her for the sparkling waves, the olive-  
 Apr. 1822. coloured hills, and vine-shaded *pergolas* of Spezzia. "If April  
 prove fine," she wrote to Mrs. Gisborne, "we shall fly with  
 the swallows."

The first day of house-hunting on the western shores of the bay was spent in vain; every hovel was inspected, and on returning to Spezzia the seekers had not a hope of finding any suitable place of abode in that direction. It remained next morning to try the eastern shores. "Fine beautiful day," Williams wrote in his journal (February 9). "Rose early, and took boat for Lerici. On going ashore to see some fishermen drag their net, an old man among them said that he knew of some houses, and would accompany us. He showed us many, but two pleased us particularly. Walked a long distance in search of others, but found nothing. Returned in the boat to Spezzia, and left that place again for Sarzana to inquire about two houses which we had seen. Arrived at Sarzana at six, where we dined and slept. *February 10.*—Fine. Signor Luciardi called, and told us that Madame Calani's house was positively not to be had, but that the one on the beach would be let for a hundred crowns a year. Went to Lerici in the afternoon, and took a boat across the bay to see a house opposite Porto Venere. Returned to Sarzana to dinner and slept there." On the night of that day on which Shelley started for Spezzia, Mary, who had been half gladdened, half saddened by the gaiety of Mrs. Beauclerc's ball, wrote, as if with some prophetic instinct, in her journal, "During a long, long evening in mixed society how often do one's sensations change, and swift as the west wind drives the shadows of clouds across the sunny hill or the waving corn, so swift do sensations pass, painting—yet oh! not disfiguring—the serenity of the mind. It is then that life seems to weigh

\* In telling Mrs. Gisborne that she sometimes goes to English balls, Mary adds the words "*mirabile dictu.*"

itself, and hosts of memories and imaginations, thrown into one scale, make the other kick the beam. You remember what you have felt, what you have dreamt; yet you dwell on the shadowy side, and lost hopes and death, such as you have seen it, seem to cover all things with a funeral pall. The time that was, is, and will be, presses upon you, and, standing the centre of a moving circle, you 'slide giddily as the world reels.' But the thought of gloom was cast aside, and the entry in Mary's journal ends with a bright glance at the innocent revelry of the night. On February 11, Williams and Shelley returned; only one house at all suitable could be found; "however, a trifle such as not finding a house," writes Mary, "could not stop Shelley; the one found was to serve for all." But some weeks must pass before a suitable time for seaside residence arrived.

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Spring in 1822 woke up early and with extreme beauty. In the first days of March the breeze was sweet and clear, and there was already a glow in the sunshine. "The hedges are budding," Mary wrote to Mrs. Hunt, "and you should see me and my friend Mrs. Williams poking about for violets by the sides of dry ditches; she being herself

'A violet by a mossy stone  
Half hidden from the eye.'

. . . Our good cavaliers flock together, and as they do not like *fetching a walk with the absurd womankind*, Jane (*i.e.* Mrs. Williams) and I are off together, and talk morality and pluck violets by the way. I look forward to many duets with this lady and Hunt. She has a very pretty voice, and a taste and ear for music which is almost miraculous. The harp is her favourite instrument; but we have none, and a very bad piano; however, as it is, we pass very pleasant evenings, though I can hardly bear to hear her sing 'Donne l'amore,' it transports me so entirely back to your little parlour at Hampstead—and I see the piano, the bookcase, the prints, the



CHAP. XI. casts, and hear Mary's *far ha-ha, ha-a!*" The indefinable charm which Mrs. Williams exercised over those whom she approached was felt even more strongly by Shelley than by Mary. As a youth his imagination had dwelt chiefly on the heroic qualities in women—the valour of pure love, intellectual courage, strength of character, a passion for reforming the world. The Cythna of his "Revolt of Islam" embodied his ideal. Now he acknowledged before all else the exquisite charity of woman, the grace of feminine tenderness—tenderness not of the heroic kind which can probe a wound to heal it, but that which lulls our pain as with some delightful anodyne, and trances the troubled sense, if only for an hour. His love for Mary had become a more substantial portion of his being than the love of those early days of poverty in London had been, when he addressed to her his little morning and evening letters of rapturous devotion. It was sobered and strengthened into a habit of his life. In a large measure it had taken the form of an anxious solicitude for her happiness, which had never quite recovered from the shattering strokes that fell upon it when little Clara and William died. He constituted himself, as far as might be, the guardian of her tranquility; made less extravagant demands; dealt prudently with her peace of mind; acknowledged the bounds of life. In this there was loss and there was gain; upon the whole, it was a serviceable education for Shelley's sympathies, bringing them close to reality, and helping to mature his mind. Mary's moods of dejection, the disturbance of serenity in one whose nature was deep and strong, caused him disturbance and pain from which he instinctively sought protection. He was at times tempted to elude difficulties rather than with courage to meet and vanquish them; and some indeed may have been unvanquishable. For his own sake, perhaps unwisely, and for hers, he avoided topics which could cause her agitation, or bring to the surface any imperfections of sympathy that existed between them. At Naples in the winter of 1818

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he had concealed from her some events—as yet unknown to us—which brought to him anxieties and grief, and he escaped to solitude, where he gave expression to his pain in verses “which,” says Mrs. Shelley, “he hid for fear of wounding me. . . . One looks back,” she continues, “with unspeakable regret and gnawing remorse to such periods, fancying that had one been more alive to the nature of his feelings, and more attentive to soothe them, such would not have existed.” Yet it was from Naples that Shelley dated the advertisement to “Rosalind and Helen,” in which he writes of his wife as “a dear friend with whom added years of intercourse add to my appreciation of its value, and who would have had more right than any one to complain that she has not been able to extinguish in me the very power of delineating sadness.”

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In 1819 and 1820, Godwin's extreme distress, and those remorseless demands for money to which Shelley refused to yield, had caused Mary intense anguish, and deprived Shelley, as he says, for a time, through no fault of himself or his wife, of “domestic peace.” He then obtained permission from Mary to intercept the letters addressed to her by her father, and to communicate to her only such as he deemed fit for her perusal. In the winter and spring of 1821, he had found in the beauty and grace and unmerited suffering, and, as he fondly imagined, the genius of an Italian girl in the Convent of St. Anna, a motive for the impassioned idealisms of his “Epipsychidion.” Mrs. Shelley had herself been deeply interested by Emilia Viviani, yet she had preserved a balance of mind which seemed at times coldness to Emilia. It was not coldness, Shelley told Emilia, but “the ash that covers an affectionate heart.” When the illusion was at an end, and Mary looked back at this episode in their lives, she could not but see and feel that Shelley's unwisdom had been greater than her own—greater, we may add, because of the vision of high truth which Shelley's genius had connected with his transient error. Emilia had never, as far as we can ascertain, been the occasion

CHAP. XI. of a real difficulty between Shelley and Mary. Mary may  
 Oct. 1821- have smiled at his "Platonics," but there is no indication that  
 Apr. 1822. she actively resented them. "Have you heard anything," he wrote to Mary from Ravenna in August, "of my poor Emilia, from whom I got a letter the day of my departure, saying that her marriage was deferred for a very short time, on account of the illness of her *sposo*?" Mary's conduct throughout had been admirable. At that same time, while Shelley was a visitor at Ravenna, the flame of Mary's love for her husband leapt forth in the indignant letter of vindication addressed to Mrs. Hoppner: "That my beloved Shelley should stand thus slandered in your minds—he the gentlest and most humane of creatures—is more painful to me, oh! far more painful than words can express. Need I say that the union between my husband and myself has ever been undisturbed? Love caused our first imprudence—love, which, improved by esteem, a perfect trust one in the other, a confidence and affection which, visited as we have been by severe calamities (have we not lost two children?), has increased daily and known no bounds."

A difficulty, however, in Shelley's life really serious had arisen through the misunderstandings between Mary and Claire. Goodwill towards Claire, and a sincere desire to serve her, existed on Mary's part; her letters to Claire, while the latter resided in Florence, are unconstrained in their friendliness, giving her a part in affairs of home that would interest her, and claiming a response of sympathy to some of her most ardent feelings on public events. But Mary did not love and cherish Claire—the wronged and unhappy woman—in a like degree with Shelley, and Shelley would not, or could not, bring his warm affection for Claire under the observation and comment of Mary's more critical judgment. Here was a real and serious failure of sympathy between husband and wife; and who shall say that the fault, if fault there were, did not lie chiefly in Shelley's lack of courageous frankness? In looking back over her wedded life a few weeks after its

mournful close, Mary Shelley, in her poem "The Choice," CHAP. XI. reproaches herself, with that boundless remorse for lost opportunities of love which death inspires, for having allowed the passion of her heart to lie within it as a hidden well, instead of constantly flowing forth in her words and looks like a fountain of murmuring, sparkling, living love. The degree of her agonized reproach is doubtless to be disregarded as a fond exaggeration of grief; but its kind, specifically stated, expresses a truth, and the self-criticism is sustained by words of Shelley. Oct. 1821—  
Apr. 1822.

"Oh, gentle Spirit! thou hast often sung  
 How fallen on evil days thy heart was wrung;  
 Now fierce remorse and unreplying death  
 Waken a chord within my heart, whose breath,  
 Thrilling and keen, in accents audible  
 A tale of unrequited love doth tell.  
 It was not anger—while thy earthly dress  
 Encompassed still thy soul's rare loveliness,  
 All anger was atoned by many a kind  
 Caress or tear, that spoke the softened mind.—  
 It speaks of cold neglect, averted eyes,  
 That blindly crushed thy soul's fond sacrifice:—  
 My heart was all thine own,—but yet a shell  
 Closed in its core, which seemed impenetrable,  
 Till sharp-toothed misery tore the husk in twain,  
 Which gaping lies, nor may unite again."

It would have been no pain, but rather a comfort to Mary Shelley's heart at the moment when she wrote these lines, to have known that once, when illness bore her down, and checked the active play of her sympathies with Shelley, whose mood was one of unusual joy; when, too, she had a sense that Godwin in his distress was renewing his demands upon her husband, and that something of importance was concealed from her—it would have comforted her to know that at such a time Shelley felt with pain the defect which she afterwards remorsefully acknowledged, and feeling it, yet pronounced on her only a gentle judgment of loving condem-

CHAP. XI. nation. "As to me, Italy is more and more delightful to me,"  
 Oct. 1821- Shelley wrote to John Gisborne on June 18, 1822; "and  
 Apr. 1822. yours and Mrs. Gisborne's presence here is almost the only  
 accessory I could desire, though if my wishes were not limited  
 by my hopes, Hogg would be included. I only feel the want  
 of those who can feel, and understand me. Whether from  
 promixity and the continuity of domestic intercourse, Mary  
 does not. The necessity of concealing from her thoughts that  
 would pain her,\* necessitates this, perhaps. It is the curse of  
 Tantalus that a person possessing such excellent powers and  
 so pure a mind as hers, should not excite the sympathy in-  
 dispensable to their application to domestic life." Poets,  
 Shelley said, are a very chameleonic race; "they take the  
 colour not only of what they feed on, but of the very leaves  
 under which they pass." A transient clouding of the sun-  
 shine of love (and in what life is there no cloud for the blue  
 sky presently to scatter or absorb?) is felt by one accus-  
 tomed to the warmth, and sensitive to the slightest change of  
 temperature as a strange gloom and chill.†

It was well for Shelley that his best and closest friend was  
 not a faint reflex of himself, and that, while desiring to be his  
 companion not only in the fireside joys but in his intellectual  
 and imaginative strivings, she yet had a character and indi-  
 viduality of her own. It was well for him that she recognized  
 realities of life as deserving of consideration which were  
 matters of indifference to him. It was well for him that she  
 did not speed him forward in error or illusion. In his elder  
 years Trelawny charged Mary Shelley with having embittered  
 seasons of Shelley's life with her womanly jealousy. In  
 earlier days he had written to her: "You know, Mary, that I  
 always loved you impetuously and sincerely, and time proves  
 its durability; we are both somewhat self-willed and cross-  
 grained, and choose to love in our own fashions; but still

\* About Godwin's affairs.

† See the poem, "To Edward Williams," beginning, "The serpent is shut out  
 from Paradise."

where is there a truer friendship than that which cements CHAP. XI.  
 Mary S. and E. T.? If I lose you, I should be poor indeed." \* Oct. 1821-  
Apr. 1822.  
 Trelawny's notions respecting the claim which one woman may make to the supreme affection of one man may not have been precisely those of a wife ardently attached to her husband. There is the jealousy of an Adriana, and the jealousy of an Imogen. In the long-run it was essential, not for Mary's happiness alone, but for Shelley's, that the bonds of loving fidelity should be drawn tight between them; and no better gift could be given to such a heart as his than the fortifying constraint of a woman's exclusive love. If this be jealousy, then all men who desire a long lifetime of joy should pray for a jealous wife, and welcome those moments of pain which result in years of happiness. It is true, indeed, that such a spirit as Shelley's can find no absolute content in mortal thing or man or woman. One who is in love with beauty finds every incarnation of beauty unsatisfying; one who is in love with love thirsts after he has drunk the fullest and purest draught. "Some of us," Shelley wrote in October, 1821, "have, in a prior existence, been in love with an Antigone, and that makes us find no full content in any mortal tie." The motto of Shelley's "Alastor," taken from St. Augustine's "Confessions," is in a certain sense the motto of his whole life—"Nondum amabam, et amare amabam, quærebam quid amarem, amans amare." No fountain, however pure, of this our earth can satisfy the soul that thirsts for the Highest. But among mortal objects of love, none was so well worth loving as the constant and faithful heart of her who had been his pupil, friend, lover, wife, and the mother of his children.

Mary Shelley had prepared Mrs. Hunt for the charm which the society of Jane Williams would add to her visit to Italy. "Williams," Shelley wrote to Leigh Hunt, "is one of the best fellows in the world; and Jane his wife a most delightful person, who, we all agree, is the exact antitype of the lady I

\* Zante, May 6, 1826.

CHAP. XI. described in 'The Sensitive Plant,' though this must have  
 Oct. 1821-  
 Apr. 1822, been a *pure anticipated cognition*, as it was written a year before I knew her." \* Her taste for music and her elegance of form and motions compensated in some degree, Shelley told Mr. Gisborne, for her lack of literary refinement.† She seemed "a sort of spirit of embodied peace" in the midst of a circle of tempests.‡ In the happiness of his friends, Edward and Jane, there was for Shelley something radiant and worshipful, like the brightness of a spring morning; Jane, with her grace, and suavity, and bland motions, and soothing words, was conceived by him as the dispenser of an exquisite felicity, to which her husband had a first claim, but the overflow of which might be Shelley's own. How could he adequately express his pleasure in her gentleness, her penetrating charity, her ineffable tenderness? She should be the Queen of Amity and halcyon hours, with Edward Williams for a fortunate Prince Consort, and he should be her humble troubadour; or call the pair Ferdinand and Miranda, with Shelley for their faithful Ariel. In the winter and spring days he did not feel that he possessed courage and ambition enough for great poetical enterprises. "I write nothing but by fits," he said to Mr. Gisborne; and to Leigh Hunt, "My faculties are shaken to atoms and torpid. I can write nothing;" and again to Hunt on March 2, "Indeed I have written nothing for this last two months. . . . What motives have I to write?" It was in this mood of imaginative torpor that he invoked a west wind of the spirit to awaken his mind to activity—

"Come, thou awakener of the spirit's ocean,  
 Zephyr, whom to thy cloud or cave  
 No thought can trace! speed with thy gentle motion."

He occupied himself from time to time with translations, admirably executed, from the Homeric hymns, from Goethe's

\* June 19, 1822.

† June 1822.

‡ To Mr. Gisborne, January 12, 1822.

"Faust," from Calderon's "Magico Prodigioso."\* But translation did not call forth his highest powers. He felt "the wisdom and deep harmony" of Goethe, and now read the "Faust," which in 1815 he had read as an exercise in the German language, over and over again "with sensations which no other composition excites." It excited in his breast that insatiable longing and wistful forefeeling for one knows not what, which Faust himself expresses in the hearing of Wagner, who has ears and understands not, while the master and his *famulus* watch from beyond the city gate the glory of the descending sun. "Perhaps all discontent with the *less* (to use a Platonic sophism)," Shelley writes, "supposes the sense of a just claim to the *greater*, and that we admirers of 'Faust' are on the right road to Paradise." No one but Coleridge, he held, was capable of rendering the greatest of modern poems into English.† The drama of Calderon, on which he was engaged, had in its subject something in common with "Faust." As a pure poet, Calderon, he thought, touched higher points than Goethe; but the balance was redressed by Goethe's weight of thought and wisdom. These fragmentary translations Shelley hoped might form the basis of a paper for the *Liberal*.

In the first days of the opening year, Shelley set himself to make a forward movement with his tragedy of "Charles the First," which had lingered long, and of which only some disconnected fragments had been written. "If I do write it," he had assured Ollier, "it shall be the birth of severe and high feelings. . . . When once I see and feel that I can write it, it is already written." In January, 1822, it seemed that he had at length resolved to grapple with his theme; but the difficulties of an historical drama entangled him. It was "the

\* Williams notes in his journal (March 20, 1822), "Walked with Shelley along the banks of the Arno. Took our writing materials, and while Shelley translated Calderon's 'Cyprian' I wrote some revisions."

† Retsch's illustrations of "Faust," which he terms a translation, gave Shelley extraordinary delight.



CHAP. XI. devil of a nut to crack." "A slight circumstance," he told Leigh Hunt, "gave a new train to my ideas, and shattered the fragile edifice when half-built." And in April, "I have done some of 'Charles the First;' but although the poetry succeeded very well, I cannot seize on the conception of the subject as a whole, and seldom now touch the canvas." The fragments which we possess contain admirable dramatic writing; but they give no evidence that the tragedy would have had that central pulse which sends life and force through every member of a breathing and moving piece of dramatic art. History but faintly interested Shelley; it is doubtful whether he could ever have found motives in a broad historical theme as inspiring to his genius as those which gave life and being to the "Cenci." \*

But although Shelley now lacked the courage and energy needful to carry him through a sustained work of imagination, fortunate hours brought into existence a series of lyrical poems as delicate as Ariel had ever sung before, under green boughs or by the yellow sands. These were the songs made for Miranda and her Prince Ferdinand; they have in them a touch of the sadness of renunciation, like that of music that creeps upon the waters,

"Allaying both their fury and our passion  
With its sweet air."

The songs and poems inspired by Jane Williams were given to her husband or to Jane, to be read by themselves alone. The loveliest of them all is that which accompanied a guitar—Shelley's gift to Jane. He had written to Horace Smith, who was then in Paris, to purchase for him a harp; but it did not suit Smith's convenience at that moment to part with the sum which the instrument would have cost. In Italy, the land of music, it must surely be possible to obtain such a gift as he desired. Having visited Leghorn with Trelawny, Shelley

\* At this time Edward Williams wrote part of a play to be called "Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua," the opening of which found approval from Shelley.

there purchased a guitar. "I have contrived to get my musical coals," he wrote to Horace Smith, "at Newcastle itself." Some time after this, Trelawny, seeking for Shelley in the pine forest near the sea, and guided by an old man who had seen "l'Inglese malinconico who haunts the woods," came upon a deep pool of dark glimmering water, by the side of which lay a hat, books, and loose papers. "The strong light streamed through the opening of the trees. One of the pines, undermined by the water, had fallen into it. Under its lee, and nearly hidden, sat the poet, gazing on the dark mirror beneath, so lost in his bardish reverie that he did not hear my approach. . . . He was writing verses on a guitar. I picked up a fragment, but could only make out the first two lines—

‘ *Ariel to Miranda*.—Take  
This slave of music.’

It was a frightful scrawl; words smeared out with his finger, and one upon the other, over and over in tiers, and all run together in most ‘admired disorder’; it might have been taken for a sketch of a marsh overgrown with bulrushes, and the blots for wild ducks; such a dashed-off daub as self-conceited artists mistake for a manifestation of genius. On my observing this to him, he answered, ‘When my brain gets heated with thought, it soon boils, and throws off images and words faster than I can skim them off. In the morning, when cooled down, out of the rude sketch as you justly call it, I shall attempt a drawing.’” \* Shelley’s note-books and loose pages of manuscript bear out Trelawny’s description, though this particular poem is not found among them; page after page often repeating the same lines or a single stanza, written with pen

\* “Records,” etc., pp. 70, 75. Mr. Garnett writes, “Shelley appears to have composed with the pen in his hand, and to have corrected as fast as he wrote; hence a page full of writing frequently yields only two or three available lines, which must be painfully disentangled from a chaos of obliterations.” He adds, “When Shelley wrote for the printer, his handwriting was singularly neat and beautiful” (“Relics of Shelley,” preface, xi., xii.).

CHAP. XI. or pencil, varied again and again with a text actually visible  
 Oct. 1821- in the process of creation.  
 Apr. 1822.

Two incidents of the month of March made a disagreeable stir in the quietude of life at Pisa, and set the tongues of gossip-mongers in lively motion. Since her return from the Baths in October, Mary Shelley now and again had attended the Sunday morning service on the ground-floor of her house, where Dr. Nott, Bampton Lecturer and learned editor of the poems of Surrey and Wyatt, had rooms, and officiated as chaplain. On Sunday, March 3, came a note from the preacher requesting her presence, and that morning's discourse seemed specially designed to protect her from her husband's evil influence, for it consisted of an attack on atheism. A flush of indignation and shame rose from Mary's heart, when she reflected that she had been betrayed, as it were, into making common cause against her husband. It was a pleasant morsel for lovers of scandal among the English residents in humdrum Pisa to roll under the tongue. Mary longed to escape from the society of all good Christians, with her husband and her boy, to that solitary island of which Shelley had dreamed when he wrote to her from Ravenna. "So Hogg is shocked," she wrote to Mrs. Gisborne (March 7), "that, for good neighbourhood's sake, I visited the *piano di sotto*.\* Let him reassure himself, since, instead of a weekly, it was only a monthly visit; in fact, after going three times, I stayed away, until I heard he was going away. He preached against atheism, and they said against Shelley. As he invited me himself to come, this appeared to me very impertinent; so I wrote to him to ask him whether he intended any personal allusion; but he denied the charge most entirely. This affair, as you may guess, among the English at Pisa made a great noise; the gossip here is, of course, out of all bounds, and some people have given them something to talk about. I have seen little

\* On December 30 Dr. Nott baptized Williams's little girl, Mary Shelley being godmother.

of it all; but that which I *have* seen makes me long most CHAP. XI.  
Oct. 1821-  
Apr. 1822. eagerly for some sea-girt isle, where with Shelley, my babe, and books and horses, we may give the rest to the winds. This we shall not have for the present. Shelley is entangled with Lord Byron, who is in a terrible fright lest he should desert him. We shall have boats, and go somewhere on the sea-coast, where, I dare say, we shall spend our time agreeably enough, for I like the Williamses exceedingly, though there my list begins and ends." Italy had, indeed, grown dear to Mary, but she found the society at Pisa little to her mind. "Perhaps as it was with me," she wrote to Mrs. Hunt, "Italy will not strike you as so divine at first; but each day it becomes dearer and more delightful; the sun, the flowers, the air—all is more sweet and balmy than in the Ultima Thule that you inhabit."\*

The other affair of March threatened for a time more serious consequences. On Sunday, the 24th, Byron, Shelley, Trelawny, Captain Hay (a Maremma hunter), Count Pietro Gamba, and Taaffe were returning from their evening ride, and had nearly reached the Porta alle Piagge, just beyond the eastern end of the Lung' Arno, when a dragoon galloped through the midst of them, jostling against Taaffe. "This nice little gentleman," writes Mary to Mrs. Gisborne, "exclaimed, 'Shall we endure this man's insolence?' Lord Byron replied, 'No; we will bring him to an account;' and Shelley (whose blood always boils at any insolence offered by a soldier) added, 'As you please!' So they put spurs to their horses (*i.e.* all but Taaffe, who remained quietly behind), followed, and stopped the man, and fancying that he was an officer, demanded his name and address, and gave their cards." Serjeant-Major Masi, who had drunk too freely, replied with oaths and bluster, and an announcement that he arrested them all. Dashing forward, Byron and Gamba passed the gate and

\* It was reported that Dr. Nott, punning on Shelley's name, had called him at Mrs. Beauclerc's a *scelerato*. Byron declared that Dr. Nott read the ninth commandment affirmatively: "Thou *shalt*, Nott, bear false witness against thy neighbour."

CHAP. XI. its guard, purposing, says Mary, to fetch arms from the Palazzio Lanfranchi. Before the others could follow, Masi had drawn his sword, and calling upon the guards to stop them, began to slash to right and left. It was Shelley who had first overtaken him and compelled him to halt, and at Shelley he now aimed a desperate sabre-stroke. Using his cap as a shield, Shelley warded the blow of the blade; but the hilt struck him on the head and knocked him from his horse. A second time the fellow struck at him while he was down, and might have seriously injured him but for the prompt interposition of Captain Hay's cane. The cane was cut in two, and Shelley's defender received a wound upon the face. Upon this Masi in alarm fled, and on the Lung' Arno encountered Byron returning to the scene of the affray. Hurrying forward in the dusk, he had reached in his flight the Lanfranchi Palace, when a servant of Byron's, imagining that the dragoon had killed his master, rushed forward, struck at him with a pitchfork, and wounded him severely in the side. The man rode on a few paces, then with a cry fell from his horse, and was borne to the hospital to the ringing of the *misericordia* bell. The beginning of the affair had been watched by the Countess Guiccioli and Mrs. Shelley from the carriage in which they followed the riders. Edward and Jane Williams, whether at their own lodgings or the Lanfranchi Palace we know not, first heard of the exciting adventure from Trelawny. "Trelawny," writes Williams in his journal, "had finished his story when Lord Byron came in, the countess fainting on his arm; Shelley sick from the blow; Lord Byron and the young count foaming with anger; Mrs. Shelley looking philosophically upon this interesting scene; and Jane and I wondering what the devil was to come next." \* By-and-by entered

\* The story is told by Mrs. Shelley in a letter to Mrs. Gisborne; by Byron in a letter to Sir Walter Scott (Moore's "Life of Byron," vol. v. pp. 330, 331); and from the *Courier François* and other sources in Medwin's "Conversations of Lord Byron." No two accounts precisely agree. I have thought it worth while to give in the main the version of Mrs. Shelley and Edward Williams.

Taaffe, with an announcement that the sergeant's wound was considered mortal. Whereupon the English party sallied forth, that they might be the first to proffer an accusation; and presently all returned, writes Williams, "mutually recriminating and recriminated."

CHAP. XI.  
Oct. 1821-  
Apr. 1822.

For a time after this event Pisa was no longer dull; rumours chased one another through the town. An Englishman, named Trelawny, it was reported, had been left dead at the gate; Lord Byron was mortally wounded—it was Byron who told the news, while Trelawny was sipping brandy-and-water by his side. Taaffe, the assassin—so Taaffe himself overheard, while walking on the Lung' Arno—was secreted in Lord Byron's house, "guarded by bulldogs." Lord Byron, with all his servants and four English gentlemen, were captured after a desperate resistance; forty brace of pistols were found in the Palazzo. So ran the tales at Pisa; while from Leghorn came tidings that on Sunday evening Byron and his party had attacked a division of dragoons, had taken a number of prisoners, and had stabbed four of them in the back, upon which the murderers had fled to Lucca. Meanwhile Sergeant-Major Masi, being honoured with the surgical attendance of Vaccà, was in truth recovering, and Byron's servants—Tita, the bearded Venetian, and Vincenzo—both entirely innocent of the assault, in the interests of justice were imprisoned. Among the English party there were smiles at "false Taaffe," as Jane now named him, who boasted great things of his valour. It was Shelley's opinion that Masi, on recovering, would demand the satisfaction of a gentleman, which, he added, ought not to be refused. The affair, which for a time made so much noise, was, as he said, "a trifling piece of business enough." Yet at a later period it served the Government as one ground among others for exiling Count Pietro Gamba and his father, whose share in the revolutionary intrigues at Ravenna was not forgotten.

The scheme of a summer colony on the Bay of Spezzia; of

CHAP. XI. which Byron, the Countess Guiccioli, and Pietro Gamba were  
 Oct. 1821— to be members, had been abandoned almost as soon as it  
 Apr. 1822. had been conceived. Even were houses for so large a party to be obtained near Spezzia, Shelley could hardly have endured a whole summer of Lord Byron's close companionship. In February, he wrote to Hunt, expressing a strong repugnance to the continuance of such intimacy with Byron as that which had of late subsisted between them. At no other time did Byron's character present itself to Shelley in colours so dark. When he quitted Ravenna in August, 1821, he understood that Byron had determined that Allegra should not be left behind him, alone and friendless, in the convent of Bagnacavallo; he hoped that an arrangement might be made by which Claire should have the happiness of seeing her child once more. During September and October, Claire waited about Leghorn, Pisa, and the Baths of St. Giuliano, expecting that Allegra some happy day would be in her arms. But when Byron, after long lingering, left Ravenna, Allegra was not with him. In Claire's journal occur from time to time little entries which show with what passionate affection her heart yearned for sight of the child, who was to her the best and dearest thing on earth. "*April* 12, 1821.—When the '*Divina Commedia*,' after being lost in the troubles of the civil war, was found and brought to Dante, he pressed it to his heart and exclaimed, 'It appears to me as if I had recovered my lost immortality.' So would it be to me if I recovered my lost Allegra as if I had come back to the warmth of life after the stiffness of the grave, so cordially, cheerily would my feelings flow in their hitherto choked channels. *June* 6, 1821.—Towards Wednesday morning I had a most distressing dream—that I received a letter which said that Allegra was ill and not likely to live. The dreadful grief I felt made awaking appear to me the most delightful sensation of ease in the world. Just so, I think, must the wearied soul feel when it finds itself in Paradise, released from the trembling anguish of the world.

*April* 21, 1821.—I dreamed this night that Tatty [Mr. Tighe] CHAP. XI.  
 had been to Bagnacavallo, and had returned, bringing Allegra, Oct. 1821—  
 to me. He said Mr. Hobhouse was at Ravenna, but had Apr. 1822.  
 declined interfering. A Miss O'Neill there had threatened  
 Albà, who then allowed Allegra to come on a visit to me. I  
 rejoiced; said to Shelley, 'Now she shall never go back again.'"

When Byron arrived at Pisa in November, and Allegra was not with him, Mr. Tighe, moved by Claire's distress, set off, she tells us, on a journey of inquiry to Venice and Ravenna; he desired to obtain information about the convent in which Allegra was confined; and to learn what was the disposition of the Countess Guiccioli, whose good offices with Byron on behalf of the child Claire had some thought of soliciting.\* The Shelleys, said Mr. Tighe, were not to know of his journey, for they would be sure to divulge the matter to Byron, which would do infinite harm. His report with respect to the convent was far from reassuring. In the marshes of the Romagna lurked a fever, which at times came forth and ravaged the district of Bagnacavallo. The convent was one of Capuchin nuns, whose poverty and austerity unfitted them for the work of educating the young; hardly any persons of better rank than petty tradespeople would send their children to such a place. The food was said to be meagre, and in winter there was no fire at which the little ones could warm their perishing hands and feet.† "What pangs of anguish I suffered in the winter of twenty-one," wrote Claire, "when I saw a bright fire, and people and children warming themselves by it, and knew my darling never saw or felt a cheerful blaze." Acting under the advice of Lady Mountcashell, she addressed a letter

\* Claire's account must be taken with caution; she speaks as if she were a resident at this time at Casa Silva, whereas, in fact, she was in Florence. The Countess Guiccioli had been for some time at Pisa, and Mary Shelley had seen a good deal of her, so that there hardly seems to be sufficient reason for Mr. Tighe's inquiring about her at a distance; but these inquiries may have been secondary, and those respecting the convent the primary object of the journey.

† Byron, it is said, paid an extra sum in order that Allegra might be specially well treated.



CHAP. XI. to Byron, in which she represented to him the dangers of residence in such a convent as that of Bagnacavallo to a child of tender years, using, she declares, "not one word of reproach." She entreated him to place Allegra with some respectable family in Pisa, or Florence, or Lucca. She, the mother, would not, if such was his desire, go near the child; nor should Mary or Shelley without his consent. No answer was returned to this letter. In a month, Claire wrote again to the same effect, alleging in explanation that she supposed her former letter to have been lost. Still no answer. In February, 1822, Miss Clairmont entertained a design of removing to Vienna, where her brother Charles lived, there to obtain a situation of some kind, and advance, under conditions more favourable than Italy afforded, with her study of the German language. But she longed before her departure to embrace her child. It seemed a lucky moment for approaching Byron, for the death of Lady Noel, tidings of which reached Pisa by February 15, made him possessor of a considerable property, and for other reasons might naturally have put him in good humour. Accordingly, on the 18th, Claire plucked up courage, and wrote as follows.

*Claire Clairmont to Byron.*

I am extremely glad to hear that, by your succession to a large fortune, your affairs have become more prosperous than ever. I wish and pray that you may have health to enjoy yourself many long years, with every other accordant circumstance that can combine to make a person happy. You will perhaps not believe that I sincerely wish this for your sake, and therefore I venture to wish it for Allegra's. I do not say that I write now upon her account, but, on the contrary, solely upon my own. I assure you I can no longer resist the internal inexplicable feeling which haunts me that I shall never see her any more. I entreat you to destroy this feeling by allowing me to see her. I waited two months in the autumn, expecting from all you professed to see her every week, and when on the sudden you would no longer allow it to be, a melancholy fearfulness came over me, which has never since passed

away. This was owing to the cruel disappointment I felt, and which may perhaps mislead my judgment; but to what besides a determined hatred can I attribute your conduct? I have often entreated Shelley to intercede for me, and he invariably answers that it is utterly useless. I am not wanting in feelings of pride, but everything yields to the extent of my present unhappiness, which grows daily towards despair, and induces me in spite to address you in hopes of an alleviation of my misery. If I could only flatter myself that you would not harden your heart against me, I might indulge the hope that you would grant what I ask.

CHAP. XI.  
Oct. 1821—  
Apr. 1822.

I shall shortly leave Italy for a new country, to enter upon a disagreeable and precarious course of life; I yield in this not to my own wishes, but to the advice of a friend whose head is wiser than mine.\* I leave my friends with regret, but indeed I cannot go without having first seen and embraced Allegra. Do not, I entreat you, refuse me this little, but only, consolation. If, instead of the friendly office I request, you resolve to humiliate me by a refusal, success in what I attempt will be impossible, for I know not where I shall gather even the spirit to begin it. I have experienced that I can conquer every feeling but those of nature; these grave themselves on the breast with thorns, and while life lasts they make the sharpness felt. I am sensible how little this letter is calculated to persuade, but it is one of my unhappinesses that I cannot write to you with the deepness which I feel; because I know how much you are prejudiced against me, and the constraint which this inspires weakens and confuses all I would express. But if you refuse me, where shall I hope for anything?

The weather is fine, the passage of the Apennines quite free and safe. The when and where of our meeting shall be entirely according to your pleasure, and with every restriction and delicacy that you may think necessary for Allegra's sake. I shall abandon myself to despair if you refuse; but indeed if your reason, my dear Friend, cannot be persuaded to alter the line of conduct you have hitherto pursued towards me in all that concerns Allegra, it were better that I were dead. So I should escape all the suffering which your harshness causes me. But hope in the present state of my spirits is necessary to me, and I will believe that you will kindly consent to my wish. How inexpressibly dearly will I not cherish your name and recollection as the author of my happiness

\* Probably Mrs. Mason, Claire's "Minerva."

CHAP. XI. in the far-off place to which I am obliged to go, and amidst the  
 Oct. 1821- strangers who will surround me! My dear Friend, I conjure you  
 Apr. 1822. do not make the world dark to me, as if my Allegra were dead. In  
 the happiness her sight will cause me I shall gain restoration and  
 strength to enable me to bear the mortifications and displeasures  
 to which a poor and unhappy person is exposed in the world. I  
 wish you every happiness.

CLAIRE.\*

Florence, Tuesday, February 18, 1822.

This powerful and piteous appeal left Byron unmoved except by anger against the writer. After three miserable days, Claire hastened to Pisa to consult with Mr. Tighe and Lady Mountcashell, Shelley and Mary, and on February 25 was again at her work in Florence. Mr. Tighe and Lady Mountcashell were for decisive measures, and were vigorously supported in their views by Elizabeth Parker.† There was talk of an attempt to rescue Allegra by stratagem; nothing, said Elizabeth, but Lord Byron's death would free the child, and were she its mother she would stab or shoot him. Mary and Shelley, while strongly of opinion that Allegra should in some way be taken out of Byron's hands, thought it prudent to temporize and watch for a favourable opportunity. It was probably about this time, though Miss Clairmont, writing late in her life, referred it to a somewhat earlier date, that Shelley, at Claire's entreaty and with much reluctance, made an experiment on Byron's feelings by representing to him the mother's growing anxiety and suffering on her child's account. Byron's "only reply," says Miss Clairmont, "was a shrug of impatience, and the exclamation that women could not live without making scenes. He never had seen the convent; yet he confessed he had not made the smallest inquiry as to whether what I had stated was true or no." Elizabeth

\* Printed from a copy in Miss Clairmont's handwriting.

† Elizabeth Parker afterwards became a nun, under the name of Sister Ancilla, in the convent of the Sisters of Charity of the Order of Santa Chiara, in Pisa. She wrote an account of her recollections of Casa Silva.

Parker, an orphan girl sent by Mrs. Godwin to live with Lady Mountcashell, a firm and affectionate friend of Claire's, wrote to the unhappy woman, relating what Shelley had told on the preceding evening at Casa Silva respecting his interview with Byron. "I never saw him [Shelley] in a passion before," said Elizabeth; "last night, however, he was downright, positively angry. . . . Mr. Shelley declared to Lady Mountcashell that he could with pleasure have knocked Lord Byron down; for when he mentioned that you were half-distracted with alarm about the child's health, and also that you were yourself in very declining health, he saw a gleam of malicious satisfaction pass over Lord's Byron's countenance. 'I saw his look,' Mr. Shelley said; 'I understood its meaning; I despised him, and I came away.' These were his own epigrammatic words. Afterwards he said, 'It is foolish of me to be angry with him; he can no more help being what he is than yonder door can help being a door.' Mr. Tighe then said, 'You are quite wrong in your fatalism. If I were to horsewhip that door, it would still remain a door; but if Lord Byron were well horsewhipped, my opinion is he would become as humane as he is now inhumane. It is the feeble character or the subserviency of his friends that makes him the insolent tyrant he is.' This observation Mr. Shelley repelled; he said others were free, of course, to use the law of coercion; he disapproved it, and the only law that should ever govern his conduct should be the law of love. The discussion appeared to be getting warm, these two think so differently; therefore Lady Mountcashell carried Mr. Shelley off to read Euripides, and the subject dropped." \*

An undated fragment of a letter from Mary to Claire, and a short letter from Shelley, also undated, probably belong to a period subsequent to Miss Clairmont's return to Professor Bojti's house at Florence, when it seemed to Claire that another interview and consultation were desirable.

\* All this may be taken with caution, as Elizabeth Parker's letter is known only through Miss Clairmont's copy.

## CHAP. XI.

*Mary Shelley to Claire Clairmont.*Oct. 1821—  
Apr. 1822.

MY DEAR CLAIRE,

Shelley and I have been consulting seriously about your letter received this morning, and I wish in as orderly a manner as possible to give you the result of our reflections. First, as to my coming to Florence; I mentioned it to you first, it is true, but we have so little money, and our calls this quarter for removing, etc., will be so great that we had entirely given up the idea. If it would be of great utility to you, as a single expense we might do it; but if it be necessary that others should follow, the crowns would be minus. But before I proceed further on this part of the subject, let me examine what your plans appear to be. Your anxiety for Allegra's health is to a great degree unfounded. Venice—its stinking canals and dirty streets—is enough to kill any child; but you ought to know, and any one will tell you so, that the towns of Romagna, situated where Bagnacavallo is, enjoy the best air in Italy. Imola and the neighbouring *paese* are famous; Bagnacavallo especially, being fifteen miles from the sea and situated on an eminence, is peculiarly salutary. Considering the affair reasonably, Allegra is well taken care of there; she is in good health, and in all probability will continue so.

No one can more entirely agree with you than I in thinking that as soon as possible Allegra ought to be taken out of the hands of one as remorseless as he is unprincipled. But at the same time it appears to me that the present moment is exactly the one in which this is the most difficult. Time cannot add to these difficulties, for they can never be greater. Allow me to enumerate some of those which are peculiar to the present instant. Allegra is in a convent where it is next to impossible to get her out; high walls and bolted doors enclose her; and more than all, the regular habits of a convent, which never permit her to get outside its gates, and would cause her to be missed directly. But you may have a plan for this, and I pass to other objections. At your desire Shelley urged her removal to Lord Byron, and this appears in the highest degree to have exasperated him. He vowed that if you annoyed him he would place Allegra in some secret convent; he declared that you should have nothing to do with her, and that he would move heaven and earth to prevent your interference. Lord Byron is at present a man of twelve or fifteen thousand a year; he is on the spot; a man reckless of the ill he does others, obstinate to des-

peration in the pursuance of his plans or his revenge. What then CHAP. XI. would you do, having Allegra on the outside of the convent walls? Oct. 1821— Would you go to America? The money we have not, nor does Apr. 1822. this seem to be your idea. You probably wish to secrete yourself. But Lord Byron would use any means to find you out; and the story he might make up—a man stared at by the Grand-Duke, with money at command, and above all on the spot to put energy into every pursuit, would he not find you? If he did not, he comes upon Shelley. He taxes him; Shelley must either own it or tell a lie; in either case he is open to be called upon by Lord Byron to answer for his conduct—and a duel—I need not enter upon that topic, your own imagination may fill up the picture.

On the contrary, a little time, a very little time, may alter much of this. It is more than probable that he will be obliged to go to England within a year;\* then at a distance he is no longer so formidable. What is certain is that we shall not be so near him another year. He may be reconciled with his wife, and though he may bluster, he may not be sorry to get Allegra off his hands; at any rate, if we leave him perfectly quiet, he will not be so exasperated, so much on the *qui vive*, as he is at present. Nothing remains constant, something may happen—things cannot be worse. Another thing I mention which, though sufficiently ridiculous, may have some weight with you. Spring is our unlucky season. No spring has passed for us without some piece of ill luck. Remember the first spring at Mrs. Harbottle's;† the second, when you became acquainted with Lord Byron; the third, we went to Marlow, no wise thing at least; the fourth, our uncomfortable residence in London; the fifth, our Roman misery; the sixth, Paolo at Pisa; the seventh, a mixture of Emilia and a Chancery suit. Now the aspect of the autumnal heavens has on the contrary been, with few exceptions, favourable to us. What think you of this? It is in your own style, but it has often struck me. Would it not be better, therefore, to wait, and to undertake no plan until circumstances bend a little more to us?

Then we are dreadfully behindhand with money at present. Hunt and our furniture has swallowed up more than our savings. You say great sacrifices will be required of us. I would make many to extricate all belonging to me from the hands of Lord

\* On business, connected with property occasioned by Lady Noel's death.

† The death of Mary's first babe in 1815.

CHAP. XI. Byron, whose hypocrisy and cruelty rouse one's soul from its depths.  
 Oct. 1821- We are, of course, still in great uncertainty as to our summer  
 Apr. 1822. residence. We have calculated the great expense of removing  
 our furniture for a few months as far as Spezzia, and it appears to  
 us a bad plan. To get a furnished house we must go nearer Genoa,  
 probably nearer Lord Byron, which is contrary to our most earnest  
 wishes. We have thought of Naples. [*Fragment of letter ends.*]

Probably accompanying this letter of Mary, the following letter went to Claire from Shelley.

*Shelley to Claire Clairmont.*

I have little to add to Mary's letter, my poor dear friend, and all that I shall do is to suspend my journey to take a house until your answer. Of course, if you do not spend the summer near us, I shall come to Florence and see and talk with you. But it seems to me far better on every account that you should resolve on this, and tranquilize yourself among your friends. I shall certainly take our house *far* from Lord Byron, although it may be impossible suddenly to put an end to his detested intimacy. *My* coming to Florence would cost ten or twenty crowns; Mary's much more; and if, therefore, we are to see you soon, this money in our present situation were better spared.

Mary tells you that Lord Byron is obstinate and *awake* about Allegra. My great object has been to lull him into security until circumstances might call him to England. But the idea of contending with him in Italy, and defended by his enormous fortune, is vain. I was endeavouring to induce him to place Allegra in the institute at Lucca, but his jealousy of my regard for *your* interests will, since a conversation I had with him the other day, render him inaccessible to my suggestions. It seems to me that you have no other resource but time and chance and change. Heaven knows, whatever sacrifices *I* could make, how gladly I should make them if they could promote your desires about her. It tears my heart to think that all sacrifices are *now* vain. Mary participates in my feelings, but I cannot write. My spirits completely overcome me.

Your ever faithful and affectionate

S.

Come and stay among us. If you like, come and look for houses with me in our boat; it might distract your mind.

"It is of vital importance," Shelley wrote to Claire,\* "both CHAP. XI. to me and to yourself, to Allegra even, that I should put a period to my intimacy with Lord Byron, and that without Oct. 1821-  
Apr. 1822. *éclat*. No sentiments of honour or justice restrain him (as I strongly suspect) from the basest insinuations, and the only mode in which I could effectually silence him, I am reluctant (even if I had proof) to employ during my father's life. But for your immediate feelings, I would suddenly and irrevocably leave the country which he inhabits, nor ever enter it but as an enemy to determine our differences *without words*. But at all events I shall soon see you, and then we will weigh both your plans and mine. Write by next post."

Calmer counsels prevailed when Shelley wrote to Claire on the morning of that Sunday on which the street-broil with Sergeant-Major Masi took place, and he could then condemn her wild projects for effecting Allegra's liberation.

*Shelley to Claire Clairmont.*

Pisa, Sunday morning [March 24, 1822].

MY DEAR CLAIRE,

I know not what to think of the state of your mind, or what to fear for you. Your late plan about Allegra seems to me in its present form pregnant with irremediable infamy to all the actors in it except yourself; in any form wherein I must actively co-operate with inevitable destruction [word cancelled by Claire]. *I could not* refuse Lord Byron's challenge; though that, however to be deprecated, would be the least in the series of mischiefs consequent upon my [word cancelled by Claire] intervention in such a plan. I say this because I am shocked at the thoughtless violence of your designs, and I wish to put my sense of their madness in the strongest light. I may console myself, however, with the reflection that the attempt even is impossible, as I have no money. So far from being able to lend me three or four hundred pounds, Horace Smith has lately declined to advance six or seven napoleons for a musical instrument which I wished to buy for Jane at Paris; nor have I any other friend to whom I could apply.

\* Undated fragment, of which the whole is here given.



CHAP. XI.

Oct. 1821—  
Apr. 1822.

You think of going to Vienna. The change might have a favourable effect upon your mind, and the occupations and exertions of a new state of life wean you from counsels so desperate as those to which you have been lately led. I must try to manage the money for your journey, if so you have decided. You know how different my own ideas are of life. I also have been struck by the heaviest inflictions almost which a high spirit and a feeling heart ever endured. Some of yours and of my evils are in common, and I am therefore in a certain degree a judge. If you would take my advice, you would give up this idle pursuit after shadows, and temper yourself to the season, and seek in the daily and affectionate intercourse of friends a respite from these perpetual and irritating projects. Live from day to day, attend to your health, cultivate literature and liberal ideas to a certain extent, and expect that from time and change which no exertions of your own can give you. Serious and calm reflection has convinced me that you can never obtain *Allegra* by such means as you have lately devised, or by any mea[ns to be \*] devised. Lord Byron is inflexible, and you [are] in his power. Remember, Claire, when you rejected my earnest advice, and checked me with that contempt which I have never merited from you, at Milan, and how vain is now your regret! This is the second of my sibylline volumes; if you wait for the third, it may be sold at a still higher price. If you think well this summer, go to Vienna; but wherever you go or stay, let the *past* be past.

I expect soon to write to you on another subject respecting which, however, all is as you already know. Farewell.

Your affectionate

S.

I am much pleased with your translation of Goethe, which cannot fail to succeed if finished as begun. Lord Byron thinks I have sent it to Paris to be translated, and therefore does not yet expect copy. I shall, of course, have it copied out for him, and preserve yours to be sent to England.

I send you 50 francesconi, 6 more than your income, as you have made some expenses for me and Mary, I know not what. Pray acknowledge the receipt of it.

[*Added on March 25.*] Mary has written, she tells me, an account of yesterday's affray. The man, I am sorry to say, is much

\* The paper is torn.

worse; never did any one provoke his own fate so wantonly. I CHAP. XI.  
 was struck from my horse, and had not Capt. Hay warded off the Oct. 1821-  
 sabre with his stick, must inevitably have been killed. Capt. Hay Apr. 1822.  
 has a severe sabre-cut across the face.

On April 10, Shelley invited Claire to Pisa, and urged her to become one of their summer party at the seaside.

*Shelley to Claire Clairmont.\**

[Pisa, April 10, 1822.]

Mary has not shown me her letter to you, and I therefore snatch an instant to write these few lines.

Come, my best girl, if you think fit, and assure yourself that every one—I need not speak for myself—will be most happy to see you; but I think you had better wait a post or two, and not make *two* journeys of it, as that would be an expense to no purpose, and we have not an overplus of money. In fact, you had better resolve to be of our party in the country, where we shall go the moment the weather permits, and arrange all your plans for that purpose. The Williamses and we shall be quite alone, Lord Byron and his party having chosen Leghorn, where their house is already taken.

Do not lose yourself in distant and uncertain plans, but systematize and simplify your motions at least for the present.

I am not well. My side torments me; my mind agitates the frame which it inhabits, and things go ill with me—that is within—for all external circumstances are auspicious.

Resolve to stay with us this summer, and remain where you are till we are ready to set off. No one need know of where you are; the Williamses are [† sure?] people, and are alone.

Before you come, look at Molini's, what German books they have. I have got a "Faust" of my own, and just now my drama on the Greeks is come.† I will keep it for you.

Affectionately and ever yours,

S.

On April 15, Claire arrived at Pisa, and on the same day came news from Spezzia that the houses on which Shelley and

\* The postmark and an entry in Claire's journal fix the date of this letter.

† Word doubtful.

‡ "Hellas," published by the Olliers.

CHAP. XI. Williams had reckoned for their summer quarters were not to be had on any terms. Neither at Genoa, where Captain Roberts had made inquiries, nor at Leghorn or Monte Nero, could a suitable villa be found by Williams. While at Pisa the Florentine advocate, a talkative, good-humoured buffoon, was examining and taking depositions in order to bring to a final issue the affair of the wounded dragoon, Williams, accompanied by Jane and Claire, started for Spezzia, to make one more search for houses on the bay. They cannot have been many hours on their journey, when Shelley and Mary received tidings of sorrowful import, which Mary chronicles in her journal with the words "Evil news." Allegra was dead. The plots and plans to remove the child, so dear to her mother's heart, from the guarded enclosure of her convent were all unneeded now; a stricter and a sadder cell must henceforth and for ever be hers. Typhus fever had raged in the Romagna; but no one wrote to inform her parents of the fact. "She had no friends," Mary told Mrs. Gisborne (June 2), "except the nuns in the convent, who were kind to her, I believe. But you know Italians; if half of the convent had died of the plague, they would never have written to have had them removed; and so the poor child fell a sacrifice. Lord Byron felt the loss at first bitterly; he also felt remorse, for he felt that he had acted against everybody's counsels and wishes, and death had stamped with truth the many and often-urged prophecies of Claire, that the air of the Romagna, joined to the ignorance of the Italians, would prove fatal to her." On the second day after their departure, Williams, Jane, and Claire were back in Pisa, bringing the report that one house, and only one, could be found, and that unfurnished—the Villa Magni, situated between Lerici and San Terenzo. "Return to Pisa," writes Williams in his journal. "Meet Shelley; his face bespoke his feelings." Dreading perhaps some violent outbreak of passion from Claire—and Byron was still hard by in the Lanfranchi Palace—Shelley resolved to

conceal the mournful tidings from her as long as possible. It CHAP. XI.  
Oct. 1821—  
Apr. 1822. was her wish to return to Florence; but Shelley would not have it so. She must remain with Mary, and both must instantly set forth for Spezzia, where Mary should use every effort to obtain possession of the vacant house. Trelawny would act as their escort. Shelley himself would see to the removal of the furniture by boats to Lerici. Although no second house had been discovered, the Williamses must also come, and bring their furniture. "Like a torrent hurrying in its course," so Mary tells Mrs. Gisborne, he carried all before him; Claire, Mary, the Williamses, Trelawny, yielded to the insistence of his will. On April 26, Mary, Claire, and Trelawny were on their way to Spezzia, Claire unconscious of the burden which oppressed the hearts of her friends. Next day, Shelley, with Jane and Edward Williams, started to meet the boats at Lerici. On Sunday morning, April 28, the aspect of affairs, especially for the Williamses, did not look promising. "Arrive at Lerici at one o'clock," Williams writes in his journal. "The harbour-master called. Not a house to be had. On our telling him we had brought our furniture, his face lengthened considerably, for he informed us that the dogana would amount to £300 English, at least. Dined, and resolved on sending our things back without unloading—in fact, found ourselves in the devil of a mess."

"Dearest Mary," wrote Shelley on that afternoon, "I am this moment arrived at Lerici, where I am necessarily detained, waiting the furniture which left Pisa last night at midnight; and, as the sea has been calm and the wind fair, I may expect them every moment. It would not do to leave affairs here in an *impiccio*, great as is my anxiety to see you. How are you, my best love, and how have you sustained the trials of your journey? Answer me this question, and how my little babe and Claire are.

"Now to business. Is the Magni house taken? if not, pray occupy yourself instantly in finishing this affair, even if

CHAP. XI. you are obliged to go to Sarzana, and send a messenger to tell  
Oct. 1821- me of your success. . . . I am anxious to hear from you on  
Apr. 1822. every account."

The obliging harbour-master, Mr. Maglian, undertook to allow the furniture to come on shore; he would consider the villa to which it should be removed as a sort of depôt until further leave came from the Genoese government. All was well with Mary; she had taken Casa Magni. No house, indeed, could anywhere be found for the Williamses; but Shelley was not to be baffled—he would contrive to give them rooms. On May 1, the whole party had taken possession of their new abode, and the hastily furnished rooms were getting into a state of disorderly order. "Passed the evening," writes Williams, "in talking over our folly and our troubles."

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## CHAPTER XII.

## LAST DAYS.

CASA MAGNI, the house taken by Shelley for his summer residence—a white house with arches, which once had been a Jesuit convent—is situated near the fishing village of San Terenzo,\* in the depth of a cove on the eastern side of the Bay of Spezzia. A steep hill shelters it behind, from which the olive-trees had been removed by the proprietor of 1822 (reputed to be insane), in order to make room for a young plantation of forest-trees. “Some fine walnut and ilex trees,” wrote Mrs. Shelley long after, “intermingled their dark massy foliage, and formed groups which still haunt my memory, as then they satiated the eye with a sense of loveliness.” Eastwards over the precipitous rocks of fantastic form a rugged, winding footpath led to the little town of Lerici, with its white flat-roofed houses by the water’s edge, and its conspicuous castle looking across the bay to Porto Venere. The hoary mountain slopes; the varied rocks of volcanic formation; the waters, violet and green, of the tideless Mediterranean; the deep southern sky; the fishers’ black huts, clinging below the little cliffs like swallows’ nests; the lonely house, which stood almost amid the waves,—made up a scene at once beautiful and strange. “Sometimes the sunshine vanished,” writes Mrs. Shelley,

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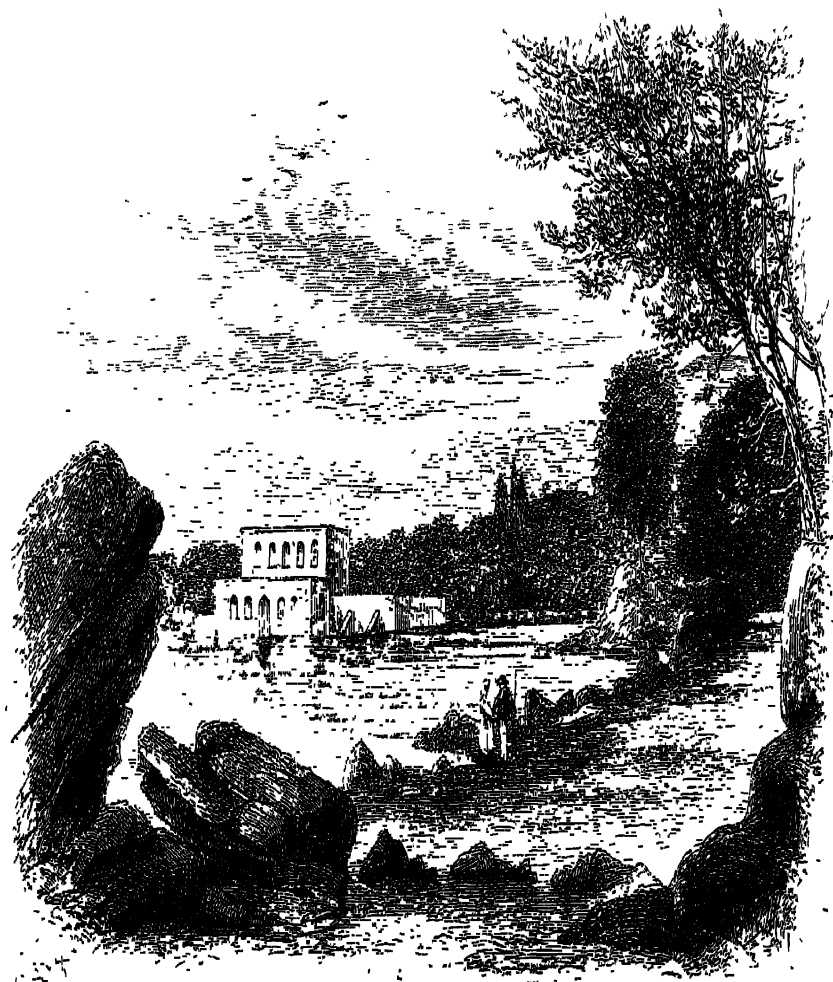
\* Or San Terenzio. Professor Mantegazza, who since twelve years has annually spent a few months at San Terenzo, contributed to the *Fanfalla della Domenica* (Rome), November 1, 1885, an article entitled “Le Reliquie di Shelley a San Terenzo.”

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"when the sirocco raged—the 'ponente' the wind was called on that shore. The gales and squalls that hailed our first arrival surrounded the bay with foam; the howling wind swept round our exposed house, and the sea roared unremittingly, so that we almost fancied ourselves on board ship. . . . The natives were wilder than the place. Our near neighbours of San Terenzo were more like savages than any people I ever before lived among. Many a night they passed on the beach singing, or rather howling; the women dancing about among the waves that broke at their feet, the men leaning against the rocks and joining in their loud wild chorus. We could get no provisions nearer than Sarzana, at a distance of three miles and a half off, with the torrent of the Magra between; and even there the supply was very deficient. Had we been wrecked on an island of the South Seas, we could scarcely have felt ourselves further from civilization and comfort; but, where the sun shines, the latter becomes an unnecessary luxury, and we had enough society among ourselves." \*

The house in 1822 consisted of a ground-floor and one story. The ground-floor, which was unpaved, was used for storing boat-gear and fishing-tackle, and might almost have been reached by the waves. Two staircases, one public, the other intended for a private staircase, led to the large dining-hall, off which to the rear was Mrs. Williams's bedroom; while the seaward rooms, occupied by Mary and Shelley, faced each other on opposite sides of the central hall. All these rooms "had once," says Trelawny, "been whitewashed." An out-house was occupied by the servants. The special advantage which Casa Magni owned, beside its noble prospect and lovely surroundings, was a terrace or verandah of considerable width, which ran the whole length of the house, and was precipitous

\* Mr. Rossetti was informed by his friend Mr. Franklin Leifchild, who met at Lerici an old man who recollected Shelley and his ways, that "Shelley's constant habits of benevolence did not abate in this wild and half-inhabited region; wherever there was sickness in a house within his range, there would he be found, nursing and advising."



VILLA MAGNI, 1822.





to the sea. The windows of Mary's and Shelley's rooms looked upon this terrace, and an occupant of the dining-hall could step out and in a moment stand in presence of a landscape and sea-view of unimaginable loveliness.

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1822.

In spite of a cloudy sky, with dashes of rain, on the morning after they had entered their new abode, Shelley and Williams were off to fish, but with small success. That evening the wind rose, and the waves began to cry and knell against the rocks. Claire, seeing perhaps the scanty accommodation of the house, insisted that she must return to Florence. The others, in order to consult in private, retired to Jane Williams's room. While they were seated, talking over what should be done, Claire entered, perceived the disturbance her entrance had caused, and in an instant with prophetic heart divined the cause of their trouble—her best-beloved Allegra was dead. It was Shelley's part to break the truth to her in its cruel details. "You may judge," Mary wrote to Mrs. Gisborne, "of what was her first burst of grief and despair." Next day (May 3) she was calmer; her chief desire was to look at the coffin before its transit to England, and if possible to possess a likeness of her child and a lock of her golden hair. Through Shelley's endeavour these wishes were in part gratified; a miniature portrait of Allegra remained with her to the day of her death.\* After a while, in place of her former agitations and plots and passions, a mournful tranquility possessed her; she seemed to Mary to have reconciled herself to her fate; but in truth her heart protested to the last against the cruelty which had deprived her of a sight of her little one, and had consigned the bright child far from a mother's care to the fever-stricken convent of the Romagna. On May 21, Claire bade farewell to her friends at Casa Magni, and set forth on her road to Florence.

\* Allegra died on April 19. The body was embalmed, and was buried at Harrow. Byron had "April 20, 1822," inscribed on the mural tablet as the date of her death.

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Shelley and Williams waited impatiently for the arrival of the boat which Captain Roberts had undertaken to see built for them, along with Byron's larger craft, at Genoa. To launch through the surf the flat-bottomed boat which they had brought from Pisa was not easy, now that the full moon seemed to have swayed the currents of the tideless Mediterranean, and swung the heavy swell upon the shore. Shelley's health during these days was nearly perfect, and he was eager to sail abroad; yet the excitement of recent agitation, caused by Allegra's death and Claire's passion of grief, left him at times somewhat shaken in spirit. "After tea, walking with Shelley on the terrace," Williams writes in his journal (May 6), "and observing the effect of moonshine on the waters, he complained of being unusually nervous, and stopping short, he grasped me violently by the arm, and stared steadfastly on the white surf that broke upon the beach under our feet. Observing him sensibly affected, I demanded of him if he were in pain. But he only answered by saying, 'There it is again—there!' He recovered after some time, and declared that he saw, as plainly as he then saw me, a naked child (Allegra) rise from the sea, and clap its hands as in joy, smiling at him. This was a trance that it required some reasoning and philosophy entirely to awaken him from, so forcibly had the vision operated on his mind. Our conversation, which had been at first rather melancholy, led to this; and my confirming his sensations by confessing that I had felt the same, gave greater activity to his wandering and ever-lively fancy."

Such moonlight visions were forgotten when, on the afternoon of Sunday, May 12, the pacers on the terrace descried a strange sail rounding the point of Porto Venere, which in due time proved to be the eagerly expected boat. A Mr. Heslop and two English seamen had brought her from Genoa; they had encountered rough seas, and spoke most highly of her performances. "She does, indeed," writes Williams, "excite my surprise and admiration. Shelley and I walked to Lerici,

and made a stretch off the land to try her, and I find she fetches whatever she looks at. In short, we have now a perfect plaything for the summer." To Shelley it was the fulfilment of his happiest anticipations for the golden months of the year. Trelawny tells us how he and his friends would outline the boat in her actual dimensions upon the sands of the Arno, and how Shelley and Williams, having a map of the Mediterranean spread before them, would squat in their imaginary cabin with faces as grave as that of Columbus and his companions. Now Shelley was the possessor of such a winged bark as he had loved to imagine in his verse, and the Mediterranean sang its song of invitation. Twenty-eight feet long by eight feet wide, the boat looked almost twice her size. The model, obtained from one of the royal dockyards, had been brought by Williams from England, and he had insisted, against Trelawny's advice and that of the builder at Genoa, that his model should be closely followed: had he not been himself aboard ship as a boy, and ought not he to know what was right? The boat was without a deck, strongly built, schooner-rigged, and for her size carried ample sail. "It took," says Trelawny, "two tons of iron ballast to bring her down to her bearings, and then she was very crank in a breeze, though not deficient in beam." Charles Vivian, a sailor-lad aged eighteen, quick and handy, who had helped to bring her round from Genoa, remained to assist Williams and Shelley in working the boat. The prudent counsel of Trelawny, to add to the crew a Genoese sailor accustomed to the coast, was rejected by Williams, who had confidence in his own knowledge and skill. Nor, indeed, was he wanting in these, though he did not possess that promptitude of action which constant practice alone can give. Shelley's seamanship was of a kind better suited to one of his own imagined boats of rare device, with prow of magic moonstone, than to a cranky craft on a sea of capricious temper. He could read and steer at the same time, he averred, the one process being mental,

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1822.

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the other mechanical. "You will do no good with Shelley," Trelawny exclaimed to his companion,\* "until you heave his books and papers overboard, shear the wisps of hair that hang over his eyes, and plunge his arms up to the elbows in a tar-bucket." But if Shelley read as he traversed the streets of Pisa, why should he not keep his beloved Plato, or Goethe, or Calderon beside him while he held the tiller and speeded over the rippling waters?

"Fine, after a threatening night," Williams wrote in his journal of May 22. "After breakfast, Shelley and I amused ourselves with trying to make a boat of canvas and reeds as light and as small as possible—she to be eight and a half feet long and four and a half broad." Shelley was delighted, says Trelawny, with this fragile toy; if it capsized in shallow water, his glee was none the less as the crisp waves curled up and over him. He liked to paddle seawards, safe in his skiff at least from "land bores;" and then to let it drift "until the sea breeze came and lapped up its side over the gunwale and drove him to the shore." On one occasion he persuaded Jane Williams with her babes to enter the frail bark, the gunwale of which was in consequence sunk within a hand's-breadth

\* Trelawny, with Captain Roberts, arrived in Byron's yacht, the *Bolivar*, on June 13. On the 16th, Trelawny went on with the yacht to Leghorn. Roberts remained at San Terenzo or at Lerici until July 1. At this time, Byron's servant, Tita, was with Shelley. Having been found innocent of any part in the affair of Sergeant-Major Masi, he was liberated, but, says Mrs. Shelley, "the Pisan police took fright at his beard. They called him 'il barbone,' and although it was declared that on his exit from prison he should be shaved, they could not tranquilize their mighty minds, but banished him." (To Mrs. Gisborne, June 2.) This Giovanni Battista Falcieri, aged twenty-four in 1822, afterwards was valet to Isaac D'Israeli. He remembered Shelley well. Once, he said, while Shelley "was living by a lake, he went to an adjacent hill, when the nurse appeared with the baby, which he took and quietly laid down, and, sending the nurse away, became so much absorbed in the book he was reading, that at length he went home, forgetting the child. On being asked where it was, he remarked that he had laid it down by the hill. Falcieri was immediately despatched to the spot, and found the morsel of humanity with eyes wide open, quite happy and safe. The place was much infested with snakes, and Tita expressed his surprise that the child had not been bitten" (Colonel W. F. B. Laurie's "Sketches of Some Distinguished Anglo-Indians," p. 170).

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of the water's edge. From the shallows he pulled round a promontory into deep blue water; then rested on his oars in dreaming mood, musing, pondering. On a sudden he raised his head, and with brightening face exclaimed joyfully, "Now let us together solve the great mystery." Preferring the colours inwrought upon "the painted veil which men call life," Jane, with feminine adroitness, beguiled her uncanny oarsman to thoughts of the shore, and when she saw the sandy bottom snatched up her babes, and clambered out so hurriedly that the punt capsized. "Edward and I," writes Trelawny, who was then a visitor at Casa Magni, "picked them up; the bard was underneath the boat, and rose with it partly on his back, and was not unlike a turtle, or a hermit crab that houses itself in any empty shell it can find." "Solve the great mystery!" exclaimed Jane. "Why, he is the greatest of all mysteries. Who can predict what he will do?"\*

In one particular only did their summer plaything displease Shelley and Williams. With words that had in them a touch of extravagance, Shelley still acknowledged the genius of Byron. "I do not write," he told Horace Smith. "I have lived too long near Lord Byron, and the sun has extinguished the glowworm." But he had drawn away from personal relations with Byron, and was resolved that henceforth they should move apart. "I shall see little of Lord Byron," he wrote to Mr. Gisborne (June 18), "nor shall I permit Hunt to form the intermediate link between him and me. I detest all society—almost all, at least—and Lord Byron is the nucleus of all that is hateful and tiresome in it." And to Horace Smith, "I, who could never have been regarded as more than the link of the two thunderbolts, cannot now consent to be even that." That anything belonging to him should be a perpetual reminder of Byron would be hateful and intolerable to Shelley. His boat was originally to have been built for

\* I have had to shorten Trelawny's telling of the story, not without inevitable loss.

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him, in partnership with Trelawny and Williams. Trelawny had chosen the name "Don Juan," and Shelley did not raise an objection. The partnership was dissolved before the boat was launched; \* she became the property of Shelley alone, at the cost of £80, and he and Mary named her the *Ariel*. "Lord Byron," writes Mary to Mrs. Gisborne (June 2), "chose to take fire at this, and determined that she should be called after the poem; wrote to Roberts to have the name painted on the mainsail; and she arrived thus disfigured. For days and nights full twenty-one did Shelley and Edward ponder on her anabaptism, and the washing out the primeval stain. Turpentine, spirits of wine, buccata, all were tried, and it became dappled, and no more. At length the piece has been taken out, and reefs put, so that the sail does not look worse. I do not know what Lord Byron will say, but, lord and poet as he is, he could not be allowed to make a coal-barge of our boat." † Shelley, in writing to Trelawny, did not betray his vexation, and named the boat as Trelawny had proposed that she should be christened. To us she shall be known by the name of Shelley's choice—his dainty *Ariel*, his singing water-nymph, *Ariel*, whose charge it was to keep calm seas and auspicious gales between the enchanted island of his dreams and the Italian shores.‡

"Percy is well," wrote Mary of her boy, "and Shelley singularly so; this incessant boating does him a great deal of

\* The wish to escape Trelawny, Shelley tells Mr. Gisborne (June 18), induced him to become the sole proprietor. Trelawny's close connection with Byron probably alienated Shelley.

† Williams writes in his journal of May 17, "Unbent the mainsail and took it to Maglian to see if the letters which Lord Byron, in his contemptible vanity, or for some other purpose, begged of Roberts to inscribe on the boat's mainsail; all in vain" (*sic*).

‡ In a letter to Mrs. Gisborne, May 3, 1823, Mary Shelley writes, "This quotation [that from 'The Tempest' on Shelley's grave] is pleasing to me also, because, a year ago, Trelawny came one afternoon in high spirits with news concerning the building of the boat, saying, 'Oh! we must all embark, all live aboard; we will *suffer a sea change*.' And dearest Shelley was delighted with the quotation, saying that he would have it for the motto of his boat."

good." Through storm and calm the days went by; it seemed a blissful pause in the impetuous race of life; a trance of silent wonder and beauty after so much excitement, so much pain, so much eager aspiration, and baffled enterprise and disappointment. Now a gale encircled the bay with whirling foam, and the waves broke upon the beach with a sound like that of booming artillery; now the waters were covered with purple nautili, "Portuguese men-of-war," as the sailors call them, which told of a lull after wild weather; now the sun was conquering the sea-mists brought by the south-west wind; or thunder-clouds gathered on the mountains, and the landscape shimmered in the heat; or the voyagers drove along the bay in the evening wind under the summer moon, "until," as Shelley writes, "earth appears another world."

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It was a pause in the race; a season for renewal of strength, and unconscious growth, before the putting forth of higher powers. "I do not go on with 'Charles the First,'" Shelley wrote (June 18). "I feel too little certainty of the future and too little satisfaction with regard to the past to undertake any subject seriously and deeply. I stand, as it were, upon a precipice, which I have ascended with great, and cannot descend without greater peril, and I am content if the heaven above me is calm for the passing moment." But from the heights to which he had climbed he could look down on life, and all its sad, mad, joyous, piteous pageantry. While in the shimmering heat of the summer days Shelley rested in his boat which weltered on the waters, or gazed forth from shore on the mystic splendour of the sea in its breathing calm, or on the endless trooping of the waves; or while he sat on moonlight nights among the rocks, his shallop close at hand, and, the rippling and lapping all around, he wrote the greatest and the wisest verses among all that he has written. "The Triumph of Life," begun at Pisa, is the expression of Shelley's mind in its mood of highest musing and imagining during the days upon the Gulf of Spezzia. It is no simple joyous mood, rather one



CHAP. of high, sad strength, pathetic renunciation, with insight  
 XII. gained from error, and serenity attained through passion.  
 Apr.-July, The poem contains the promise for Shelley's poetry, and  
 1822. perhaps for Shelley's life, of a reconciliation between his  
 pursuit of the ideal and his dealings with actual events and  
 living men and women. The triumphal car of life rolls  
 forward in Shelley's vision amid the mad troop of those who  
 hasten they know not whither; while, bound to the conqueror's  
 chariot are the world-renowned captives, who, for any lure  
 that life can offer, had yielded up their freedom, or, having  
 fought a vain fight, had been defeated. But all are not there,  
 either in that fierce and obscene crowd or among those  
 melancholy captives. Socrates is not there; nor is Jesus. To  
 know one's-self, and to know the Highest, this and this alone  
 makes it impossible that life should ever defeat us or deceive.  
 For, knowing these, we shall know the world, and temper our  
 heart to its object, loving well, yet wisely, not with the self-  
 abandoning passion of Rousseau, not even with the purer and  
 loftier error of Plato. "Good far more than evil impulses,"  
 Shelley had written to Mary from Ravenna, "love far more  
 than hatred, has been to me, except as you have been the  
 object of it, the source of all sorts of mischief." Henceforth  
 he would be on his guard against the errors of love—against  
 identifying any mortal object with that for which alone man's  
 being is made; he would love what he had found best and  
 truest in life; but even this with a knowledge that it is not the  
 absolute, and with a touch of renouncement in his adhesion.  
 Such is part of the ethical or spiritual import of Shelley's  
 noble fragment. In the general outline of its imaginative  
 treatment and in its metre the poem follows Petrarch's  
 "Triumph of Love," and this fact may encourage us to believe  
 that Shelley did not design to extend the poem to great  
 length, and that our loss in its incompleteness is less serious  
 than some have supposed. In the details of its imagery there  
 is a Dantesque manner rarely found in Shelley's writings. If

we may venture to hope that in the existing fragment we possess a considerable portion of the entire poem, we yet must read it with a sense, at once proud and mournful, that the "Triumph of Life" may have been but the starting-point for a new and higher development of the writer's genius.

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Shelley's mood this summer was one of unusual joy; his health was exceptionally good. Yet, while taking a vigorous part in life, he would henceforth hold loosely by it, and never become its captive slave. At times he dreamed that a day might arrive when, if the anguish of an irrevocable malady possessed his senses, he might himself lightly sever the link which bound him to this world. Meanwhile he would play his part in the world earnestly and with activity. Two extracts from letters written within a few days of each other, and both within a few days of Shelley's death, exhibit these different aspects of his mind. "Should you meet with any scientific person," he wrote to Trelawny on June 18, "capable of preparing the *Prussic Acid*, or *essential oil of bitter almonds*, I should regard it as a great kindness if you could procure me a small quantity.\* It requires the greatest caution in preparation, and ought to be highly concentrated; I would give any price for this medicine. You remember we talked of it the other night, and we both expressed a wish to possess it; my wish was serious, and sprung from the desire of avoiding needless suffering. I need not tell you I have no intention of suicide at present, but I confess it would be a comfort to me to hold in my possession that golden key to the chamber of perpetual rest." But for a denizen of our earth, activity, not rest, is the law of existence. "It seems to me," Shelley wrote to Horace Smith, with reference to Moore's warnings against the dangerous influence exercised by him over Byron—"it seems to me that things have now arrived at such a crisis as

\* On March 15, 1820, Claire had a talk with Mrs. Mason about "the Prussic acid (*sic*), distilled from laurel leaves, which kills without pain in a few minutes."

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requires every man plainly to utter his sentiments on the inefficacy of the existing religious, no less than political systems, for restraining and guiding mankind. Let us see the truth, whatever that may be. The destiny of man can scarcely be so degraded that he was born only to die; and if such should be the case, delusions, especially the gross and preposterous ones of the existing religion, can scarcely be supposed to exalt it. If every man said what he thought, it could not subsist a day. But all, more or less, subdue themselves to the element that surrounds them, and contribute to the evils they lament by the hypocrisy that springs from them." Shelley, the armed soldier of ideas, was still alert and vigilant. But if ever his zeal was destructive, it was not so now. He abhorred superstition chiefly because it lies like a shadow between man and God, and the eclipse hanging over heaven is worshipped in place of the true sun.\*

"I still inhabit this divine bay," Shelley wrote on June 29, "reading Spanish dramas, and sailing, and listening to the most enchanting music." The music was that of Jane's guitar, played at evening on the terrace, or on board the *Ariel* while she sailed slow beneath the moon. The simple melodies affected Shelley more deeply than could music more complex and abstruse. "If the past and the future could be obliterated," he says, "the present would content me so well that I could say with Faust to the passing moment, 'Remain thou, thou art so beautiful.'" And again, "My only regret is that the summer must ever pass, or that Mary has not the same predilection for this place that I have, which would induce me never to shift my quarters." Mary, indeed, could not find the same pleasure in life at San Terenzo that Shelley had,

\* "And Gregory, and John, and men divine,  
Who rose like shadows between man and God,  
Till that eclipse, still hanging over heaven,  
Was worshipped by the world o'er which they strode  
For the true sun it quenched."

whose days were spent drinking in the joy of the sun, the breeze, the waves. Again there was promise that a babe would be theirs before the winter came, and Mary, weak and nervous, had little capacity to enjoy the compensations afforded by her surroundings for the roughness and discomforts of life at Casa Magni. The toils of housekeeping for two families taxed her strength. The very excess of beauty oppressed and persecuted her overwrought nerves—beauty in whose midst she lay powerless, which encircled her as with some woven spell, or which held her passive under a very nightmare of loveliness.

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During these days Mary was aware that things went ill with her father, and that Shelley, through his regard for her was concealing the truth. "The die, so far as I am concerned seems to be cast," Godwin had written to her on April 19, "and all that remains is that I should entreat you to forget that you have a father in existence. Why should your prime of youthful vigour be tarnished and made wretched by what relates to me? I have lived to the full age of man in as much comfort as can reasonably be expected to fall to the lot of a human being. What signifies what becomes of the few wretched years that remain?" "This day," he wrote a fortnight later, "we are compelled by summary process to leave the house we live in, and hide our heads in whatever alley will receive us. If we can compound with our creditor, and he seems not unwilling to accept £400 (I have talked with him on the subject), we may emerge again." "The Godwins," Shelley had written to Mr. Gisborne in April, "are for ever plotting and devising pretexts for money; none of which, however, they get; first, because I *can't*; and secondly, because I *won't*." \* In May, Shelley was convinced that Godwin was indeed in dire distress. He wrote to Horace Smith begging that he would advance the sum of £400; but Godwin had

\* In April, Shelley wrote to Mr. Gisborne, begging him to try to transfer his affairs from Longdill's hands to those of some other attorney. He estimated his debts at £22,500, which by skilful management, he believed, might be reduced to £14,000 or £15,000.

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already applied in that quarter and in vain. It was not in Smith's power to lend such a sum, nor did he believe that the loan would benefit Godwin, whose proper course would have been to take the benefit of the Insolvent Act. Why should he call upon his friends to give him their money to pay away to strangers, commissioners, and assignees? Such letters as those of Godwin could not be placed in Mary's hands while she was weak and ailing; yet something must be told her in reply to her inquiries about her father. Shelley's difficult duty was to protect her from sudden shock or prolonged suffering, and at the same time to keep open, if possible, such communications as might be safely permitted between her and her father. "It is not my intention or my wish," he wrote to Mrs. Godwin (May 29), "that the circumstances in which your family is involved should be concealed from her, but that the details should be suspended until they assume a more prosperous character, or at least the letters addressed to her, or intended for her perusal on that subject, should not convey a supposition that she could do more than she does, thus exasperating the sympathy which she already feels too intensely for her father's distress, which she would sacrifice all she possesses to remedy, but the remedy of which is beyond her power." In such protective care for Mary's weal there is a manly love more precious, perhaps, than those boyish transports of the early days of their united lives from which this riper fruit of affection had grown.

"I described to you the place we were living in," wrote Mary to Mrs. Gisborne, in a letter which recalls the incidents of the great sorrow that closed her youth; "our desolate house, the beauty yet strangeness of the scenery, and the delight Shelley took in all this; he never was in better health or spirits than during this time. I was not well in body or mind. My nerves were wound up to the utmost irritation, and the sense of misfortune hung over my spirits. No words can tell you how I hated our house and the country about it.

Shelley reproached me for this. His health was good, and the place was quite after his own heart. What could I answer? That the people were wild and hateful; that though the country was beautiful, yet I liked a more *countryfied* place, and that there was great difficulty in living; that all our Tuscans would leave us, and that the very jargon of these *Genovese* was disgusting. This was all I had to say, but no words could describe my feelings; the beauty of the woods made me weep and shudder; so vehement was my feeling of dislike, that I used to rejoice when the winds and waves permitted me to go out in the boat, so that I was not obliged to take my usual walk among tree-shaded paths, alleys of vine-festooned trees—all that before I doted on, and that now weighed on me. My only moments of peace were on board that unhappy boat—when, lying down with my head on his knee, I shut my eyes and felt the wind and our swift motion alone.” Such had been Mary’s posture in the boat which crossed the Channel on that night long ago when she and Shelley had fled together from London. “Mary was resting between my knees, that were unable to support her; she did not speak or look, but I felt that she was there. I had time at that moment to reflect and even to reason upon death; it was rather a thing of discomfort and of disappointment than of horror to me. We should never be separated, but in death we might not feel or know our union as now. I hope, but my hopes are not unmixed with fear for what will befall this inestimable spirit when we appear to die.” \*

To Claire, in Florence, tidings were sent by Shelley of the affairs of Casa Magni towards the close of May.

*Shelley to Claire Clairmont.*

Lerici, Tuesday evening [May 28, 1822 †].

MY DEAR CLAIRE,

Tell me when we are to expect you, and the precise hour and day at which you arrive at Via Reggio. I do not expect

\* Journal, July 28, 1814.

† The date is fixed by the postmarks.

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that you will have found any motives at Florence for altering your intentions with respect to this summer, and I think that at least for the present you would be happier here than anywhere else. I have heard from Mrs. Mason. Mary still continues to suffer terribly from languor and hysterical affections, and things in every respect remain as they were when you left us. The letters on the sail, after having undergone a thousand processes, remain still distinct, and the only difference is that the sail is in a dismal condition. We cannot match the stuff. I sailed to Massa the other day, and returned late at night against a high sea and heavy wind, in which the boat behaved excellently. I sit within the whole morning, and in the evening we sail about. I write a little. I read, and enjoy for the first time these ten years something like health. I find, however, that I must neither think nor feel, or the pain returns to its old nest.

Williams seems happy and content, and we enjoy each other's society. Jane is by no means acquiescent in the system of things, and she pines after her own house and saucepans, to which no one can have a claim except herself. It is a pity that any one so pretty and amiable should be so selfish.\* Don't tell her this, and come soon yourself, I hope, my dear Claire, with tranquilized spirits and a settled mind to your ever constant and affectionate friend,

P. B. S.

Mrs. M[ason] will tell you all Sk[inner] St[reet] news. Mary is not in a state to hear it.

*Shelley to Claire Clairmont.*

Lerici, Thursday [May 30, 1822 †].

MY DEAR CLAIRE,

I am vexed to hear that you are so ill, although the state of your spirits does not surprise me. I do not think there is any chance of your experiencing annoyance of whatever kind at Lerici, as I suspect between me and the only object from which it could spring [*i.e.* Byron] there is a great gulph fixed, which by the nature of things must daily become wider. I hear nothing of Hunt, nor have we any letter from England except those you are acquainted with, and one from Mr. Gisborne. I think you would

\* In a letter to Mr. Gisborne (June 18), Shelley writes, "I like Jane more and more, and I find Williams the most amiable of companions."

† The postmarks fix the date.

be happier here, and indeed always either with or near me; but on this subject your own feelings and judgment must guide you. My health is much better this summer than it has been for many years; but the occupation of a few mornings in composition have somewhat shaken my nerves. I have turned Maria's room into a study, and am in this respect very comfortable. What do you think about the situation of the G[odwin]s, and their pretensions upon our resources? This question you cannot answer in a letter, but I should be very glad to hear your opinion on it; meanwhile I do nothing. Mary has been very unwell; she is now better, and I suppose it will be necessary to make the Godwins a subject of conversation with her; at present I put off the evil day. The superscription of my poor boat's infamy is erased. We have had the piece taken out, and new reef-bands put in, and in such a manner that it will be impossible to distinguish that it has been mended; it merely appears as if two additional reefs had been inserted, of which indeed we were greatly in want. Jane the other day was very much discontented with her situation here, on account of some of our servants having taken something of hers; but now, as is the custom, calm has succeeded to storm, to yield to the latter in accustomed vicissitude. Mary, though ill, is good. And how are you?

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I wish you could mark down some good cook for us. A man, of course. If you could find another Betta without the disagreeable qualities of the last, it would do as well.

Your ever affectionate

S.

Say when we are to come to meet you.

At five o'clock on the morning of June 6, Shelley and Williams started in the *Ariel* for Via Reggio to meet Claire on her way from Florence to Casa Magni. Baffling morning breezes fell at noon into a calm; the heat was excessive; and the boat lay for hours like a log on the water. When evening came they were no further than Massa, and had lost the chance of bringing Claire round by sea. "At seven," Williams writes in his journal, "rowed in to Massa beach; but on attempting to land we were opposed by the guard, who told us that the head person of the fort (of two rusty guns) being at Festa, that



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as he was not able to read (*sic*), we must wait till the former arrived. Not willing to put up with such treatment, Shelley told him at his peril to detain us, when the fellow brought down two old muskets, and we prepared our pistols, which he no sooner saw we were determined to use than he called our servant to the beach, and desiring him to hold the paper about a yard from him, he suffered two gentlemen who were bathing near the place to explain who and what we were. Upon this, the fellow's tone changed from presumption to the most cowardly fawning, and we proceeded to Massa unmolested. Slept at Massa about three miles inland." Next day, after beating slowly round Magra Point, Shelley and Williams reached home in the afternoon a few hours before the arrival of Claire, who had travelled from Via Reggio by land.\*

In good time Claire arrived; on the next day or the next but one Mary Shelley was seriously unwell,† and for a week she remained in a condition which caused grave anxiety to her friends. On the morning of Sunday, June 16, came the threatened calamity—a dangerous miscarriage. Her life, probably through Shelley's promptitude and decision, was saved. "I was so ill," Mary afterwards wrote to Mrs. Gisborne, "that for seven hours I lay nearly lifeless—kept from fainting by brandy, vinegar, eau-de-Cologne, etc. At length, ice was brought to our solitude; it came before the doctor, so Claire and Jane were afraid of using it; but Shelley overruled them, and by an unsparing application of it I was restored. They all thought, and so did I at one time, that I was about to die." Claire's presence at Casa Magni at such a crisis had its uses; yet to the invalid she did not bring comfort or repose of mind. "Claire is with us," Shelley wrote to Mr. Gisborne (June 18); "and the death of her child seems to have restored her to tranquility. Her character is somewhat altered. She is viva-

\* Williams's diary fixes the date of Claire's arrival.

† Williams's journal gives the date June 9; Mary, writing in August, says June 8. Williams's entry of the 9th may have reference to the 8th.

cious and talkative, and, though she teases me sometimes, I like her. Mary is not, for the present, much discontented with her visit, which is merely temporary, and which the circumstances of the case rendered indispensable.”

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Over-fatigue and the alarm caused by Mary's illness strained Shelley's nerves, and afflicted him in sleep with frightful visions. "I think it was on the Saturday after my illness [June 22 \*]," wrote Mary, "while yet unable to walk, I was confined to my bed, in the middle of the night I was awoke by hearing him scream and come rushing into my room; I was sure that he was asleep, and tried to waken him by calling on him, but he continued to scream, which inspired me with such a panic that I jumped out of bed and ran across the hall to Mrs. Williams's room, where I fell through weakness, though I was so frightened that I got up again immediately; she let me in, and Williams went to Shelley, who had been wakened by my getting out of bed. He said that he had not been asleep, and that it was a vision that he saw that had frightened him. But as he declared that he had not screamed, it was certainly a dream and no waking vision. What had frightened him was this. He dreamt that, lying as he did in bed, Edward and Jane came in to him; they were in the most horrible condition—their bodies lacerated, their bones starting through their skin, the faces pale yet stained with blood; they could hardly walk, but Edward was the weakest and Jane was supporting him. Edward said, 'Get up, Shelley; the sea is flooding the house, and it is all coming down.' Shelley got up, he thought, and went to his window that looked on the terrace and the sea, and thought he saw the sea rushing in. Suddenly his vision changed, and he saw the figure of himself strangling me, that had made him rush into my room; yet, fearful of frightening me, he dared not approach the bed, when my jumping out awoke him, or, as he phrased

\* Williams, in his journal of Sunday, June 23, writes, "During the night Shelley sees spirits, and alarms the whole house."

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it, caused his vision to vanish. All this was frightful enough, and talking it over the next morning, he told me that he had had many visions lately. He had seen the figure of himself, which met him as he walked on the terrace, and said to him, 'How long do you mean to be content?'—no very terrific words, and certainly not prophetic of what has occurred. But Shelley had often seen these figures when ill; but the strangest thing is that Mrs. Williams saw him. Now Jane, though a woman of sensibility, has not much imagination, and is not in the slightest degree nervous, neither in dreams or otherwise. She was standing one day—the day before I was taken ill—at a window that looked on the terrace with Trelawny; it was day; she saw, as she thought, Shelley pass by the window, as he often was then, without a coat or jacket; he passed again. Now, as he passed both times the same way, and as from the side towards which he went each time there was no way to get back except past the window again (except over a wall twenty feet from the ground), she was struck at seeing him pass twice thus, and looked out and seeing him no more she cried, 'Good God! can Shelley have leapt from the wall? Where can he be gone?' 'Shelley?' said Trelawny; 'no Shelley has past. What do you mean?' Trelawny says that she trembled exceedingly when she heard this; and it proved, indeed, that Shelley had never been on the terrace, and was far off at the time she saw him." \*

News to rejoice Shelley reached the Villa Magni on June 19.

\* Medwin jumbles together the details of the story of Shelley's dream and his vision of his own phantasm or double. This last he relates on Byron's authority. Shelley thought that he saw a figure wrapped in a mantle, which lifted up the hood of his cloak, and revealed the phantasm of himself, saying, "Siete soddisfatto?" He adds that an incident resembling this is found in a drama attributed to Calderon, "El Embozado ó el encapotado," which Shelley had been reading. I can find mention of no such title in Barrera's "Catalogo del Teatro Antiguo Español." In Moore's "Life of Byron" we read (vol. v. p. 365) that Byron related how some friends of Shelley, sitting together one evening, had seen him distinctly, as they thought, walk into a little wood at Lerici, when at the same moment, as they afterwards discovered, he was far away in quite a different direction.

The Hunts, who had left Plymouth more than a month since, were at last in the harbour of Genoa; the children in the best of health and spirits, the elders not the worse for their voyage; in a few days they would pass Lerici on their way by sea to Leghorn, and Hunt's eyes might perhaps distinguish from the vessel's side the white house on the water's edge inhabited by his friends. Shelley would have hastened at once to Genoa, but that Hunt's letter had been delayed in its transmission from Pisa, and he feared that the travellers might have started for Leghorn before he could reach Genoa. It was glorious midsummer weather; too dry and sultry for the crops, but hardly too hot for Shelley's enjoyment. At Parma the labourers were forbidden to work in the fields between ten o'clock and five; prayers for rain were offered up in the churches, and relics were borne in procession. The *Ariel*, which for a while had been beached, was run from shore, in order that, on hearing of Hunt's departure from Genoa, Shelley might immediately put to sea and chase the *David Walter* to Leghorn. While waiting thus in the long monotony of glowing summer days, a happy incident took place. A parcel of Shelley's books which had arrived from England in May, and had been sent unopened to Genoa to be inspected by the ecclesiastical authorities, lest it should contain any immoral or seditious publication, at length was delivered into the hands of the owner. Here was abundant pasturage for the coming July days after Shelley's return from Leghorn. Among other works which enjoyed the permission of the Church was "Queen Mab" in Clark's pirated imprint, to which Williams turned with eager curiosity, finding it an astonishing work, containing admirable passages of verse, and notes as subtle and elegant as their author could write to-day.\*

By July 1 news had reached Casa Magni of Hunt's de-

\* Medwin tells how Shelley's books on a former occasion were examined at Rome. The Bible, he says, was confiscated; Spinoza passed free.

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With morning came ill tidings. A brawl at Byron's villa at Monte Nero had given the government the excuse they desired for banishing Count Gamba and his family from Tuscany. Byron in consequence would instantly quit the country; he would sail for America, or journey, as he had intended some months since, to Switzerland. Trelawny must at once start for Genoa in the *Bolivar*, and there make arrangements for the carriage of Byron's yacht to the Lake of Geneva. Such reports heard from the deck of the *Bolivar* received confirmation when Shelley landed. If Byron should quit Italy, what was to become of Hunt? what of the project of the journal? The damp cast on Shelley's hopes for his friend, however, must not dull his welcome to Italy. Already, indeed, he had given Hunt most cordial greeting by letter. "A thousand welcomes, my best friend, to this divine country," he had written on June 19; "high mountains and seas no longer divide those whose affections are united. We have much to think of and talk of when we meet at Leghorn; but the final result of our plans will be peace to you, and to me a greater

degree of consolation than has been permitted me since we met." Now, in the hotel at Leghorn, the long-parted friends were once more face to face. Thornton Hunt remembered after many years the cry with which Shelley rushed into his father's arms: "I am inexpressibly delighted; you cannot think how inexpressibly happy it makes me." During four years of absence each of the two had somewhat altered in appearance. "I have become since you saw me," Leigh Hunt had written, with a touch of playful exaggeration, "an elderly gentleman, with sunken cheeks, and temples that throb at the least touch of emotion—joy especially." Shelley, on the contrary, had grown in manly vigour. His brown hair, indeed, was sprinkled with grey; but his chest seemed of larger girth; "his voice was stronger, his manner more confident and downright, and although not less emphatic, yet less impulsively changeful."\* With characteristic kindness and energy, he undertook to see the Hunts comfortably settled in the rooms prepared for them at Pisa in the Lanfranchi Palace, and insisted on bringing Vaccà to visit Mrs. Hunt, who still suffered from the illness consequent on her cares, anxieties, and exhaustion of the preceding year. Vaccà's opinion was unfavourable, and Hunt's spirits, already shaken by the coldness and caprice of Byron, sank low when he heard how slight was the hope that his wife could outlive the year.† It was Shelley's task on the one hand to sustain Hunt's drooping courage, and on the other to screw, if possible, Byron's mind to the sticking-place about the journal. "Between ourselves," he had written a few days since to Horace Smith (June 29), "I greatly fear that this alliance will not succeed; for I, who could never have been regarded as more than the link of the two thunderbolts, cannot now consent to be even that; and how long the alliance between the wren and the eagle may continue I will not prophesy." For Hunt's sake it was now necessary

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\* Thornton Hunt, in his "Shelley" in the *Atlantic Monthly*, February, 1863.

† Vaccà was mistaken. Mrs. Hunt lived until 1857.

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that Shelley should endeavour to fix the vacillating will of Byron, and bind him to the fulfilment of his engagement.\* And, as in many other instances, he bore down all opposition and effected his purpose. Byron would settle in Lucca; Hunt should have the copyright of "The Vision of Judgment" for his first number. "This offer," Shelley wrote to Mary, "if sincere, is *more* than enough to set up the journal; and, if sincere, will set everything right." With the success of his effort on his friend's behalf, Shelley's spirits rose. On July 4, while the affairs of Hunt were still entangled, he had written in a melancholy strain to Jane Williams, with no other motive than to give relief to a vague sadness, which he dared not express in his letter to Mary, whose dejection was already too profound. "How soon those hours past," he wrote to Mrs. Williams, "and how slowly they return, to pass so soon again, and perhaps for ever, in which we have lived together so intimately and happily! Adieu, my dearest friend. I only write these lines for the pleasure of tracing what will meet your eyes. Mary will tell you all the news." And to Mary on the same day, "How are you, my best Mary? Write especially how is your health, and how your spirits are, and whether you are not more reconciled to staying at Lerici, at least during the summer. You have no idea how I am hurried and occupied. I have not a moment's leisure, but will write by the next post." By Sunday, July 7, his work had all been done, and the day was given to happy idleness. Acting as guide to the sights of Pisa, he visited the Leaning Tower with Hunt, and together they listened to the pealing organ in the Duomo. "He was looking better," writes Hunt, "than I had ever seen him; we talked of a thousand things—we anticipated a thousand pleasures." When on that day he called to take leave of Lady Mountcashell, he seemed to her in better health and spirits than she had ever known him, his face

\* Hence, probably, his moving between Pisa and Leghorn during the days from the 4th to the 7th of July.

burnt by the sun, and his heart light because he had succeeded in rendering his poor friends tolerably comfortable. Yet the ground-tone of his disposition, Hunt thought, was less sanguine than it had been in former times. "If I die to-morrow," he said to Mrs. Hunt, "I have lived to be older than my father; I am ninety years of age."

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When darkness fell, adieus were said. Hunt entreated his friend, if the weather were violent on the morrow, not to give way to his daring spirits and venture to sea. For reading on the voyage, Shelley took with him Hunt's copy of the last volume of Keats—that containing the noble fragment of "Hyperion." "Keep it," said Hunt, "till you give it to me with your own hands." And so the friends parted, and Shelley's post-chaise drove through the dark along the road to Leghorn.\*

The weather had held on in unabated heat and glare and oppressive July splendour. "Processions of priests and religiosi," wrote Williams in his journal (July 4), "have for several days been active in their prayers for rain; but the gods are either angry, or nature is too powerful." The aspect of the sky on Monday morning, July 8, seemed to portend a change; there was a thunderstorm, but it rolled away, and all again was fair. The forenoon was spent by Shelley in necessary business in the town; he visited his bankers' with Trelawny, obtained a supply of dollars, and made purchases of articles needed for the housekeeping at Casa Magni. A light breeze, blowing in the direction of Lerici, sprang up. Captain Roberts was not without apprehension that the elements were brewing a tempest. "Stay," he said, "until to-morrow, to see if the weather is settled." But Edward Williams for days had been eager to return; in seven hours, he declared, they would be at home. Shelley's fit of ex-

\* In his "Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries," Hunt stated that Shelley intended to sign his will at Leghorn on the morning of July 8. He omits this statement from the passage as reprinted in his Autobiography.



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travagant good spirits that morning did not predispose him to a surly prudence, and he would not say nay to the desire of his friend.\* By midday, or a little later, they were on board the *Ariel*, having with them the sailor-lad Charles Vivian, who had been in charge of the boat. Trelawny, in the *Boliviar*, proposed to accompany them into the offing, but not having obtained a port-clearance from the Health Office, he was not permitted to carry out his intention. Between one and two o'clock, the *Ariel* sailed out of the harbour, almost at the same moment with two feluccas.† Sullenly and reluctantly Trelawny re-anchored, furled his sails, and with a ship's glass watched the progress of his friends' boat. They should have started at early morning, said his Genoese mate, and added, "They are standing too much in shore; the current will set them there." "They will soon have the land-breeze," replied Trelawny. "Maybe," continued the mate, "she will soon have too much breeze; that gaff topsail is foolish in a boat with no deck and no sailor on board." Then, pointing to the south-west, "Look at those black lines and dirty rags hanging on them out of the sky; look at the smoke on the water; the devil is brewing mischief."

Captain Roberts had also kept the boat in view. Standing on the end of the mole, he saw her going at about the rate of seven knots. Anxious to know how she would weather the storm which was visibly coming from the Gulf, he got leave to ascend the lighthouse tower, whence he could still discern her about ten miles out at sea, off Via Reggio, and he could

\* Talking of presentiments with Mary, he had said not long before that "the only one that he ever found infallible was the certain advent of some evil fortune when he felt peculiarly joyous."

† Trelawny named twelve as the hour of sailing in his account of the events which Leigh Hunt printed in his "Lord Byron," etc. In an early manuscript copy of this I find half-past twelve. In his later accounts, he makes the hour of sailing later by two or three hours. Mrs. Shelley, having probably Roberts as her authority, states, in her letter to Mrs. Gisborne, August 15, 1822, that they sailed at one o'clock. The hour which I have given above agrees with Roberts's statement that they were sailing seven knots an hour, and that at three o'clock they were ten miles out at sea.

perceive that they were taking in the topsail; then the haze of the storm hid them, and he saw them no more. "Although the sun was obscured by mists," Trelawny writes, "it was oppressively sultry. There was not a breath of air in the harbour. The heaviness of the atmosphere and an unwonted stillness benumbed my senses. I went down into the cabin and sank into a slumber. I was roused up by a noise overhead, and went on deck. The men were getting up a chain-cable to let go another anchor. There was a general stir amongst the shipping; shifting berths, getting down yards and masts, veering out cables, hauling in of hawsers, letting go anchors, hailing from the ships and quays, boats sculling rapidly to and fro. It was almost dusk, although only half-past six o'clock.\* The sea was of the colour, and looked as solid and smooth as a sheet of lead, and covered with an oily scum. Gusts of wind swept over without ruffling it, and big drops of rain fell on its surface, rebounding, as if they could not penetrate it. There was a commotion in the air, made up of many threatening sounds, coming upon us from the sea. Fishing-craft and coasting-vessels, under bare poles, rushed by us in shoals, running foul of the ships in the harbour. As yet the din and hubbub was that made by men, but their shrill pipings were suddenly silenced by the crashing voice of a thunder-squall that burst right over our heads. For some time no other sounds were to be heard than the thunder, wind, and rain. When the fury of the storm, which did not last for more than twenty minutes, had abated, and the horizon was in some degree cleared, I looked to seaward anxiously, in the hope of descrying Shelley's boat amongst the many small craft scattered about. I watched every speck that loomed on the horizon, thinking that they would have borne up on their return to the port, as all the other boats that had gone out in the same direction had done." †

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\* Mrs. Shelley again, probably on Roberts's authority, names an earlier hour. It was about three, she says, when he saw the *temporale* coming from the gulf.

† Medwin, on board a merchant vessel sailing from Naples to Genoa, was

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At eight o'clock Trelawny went on shore. It was then calm; but during the night the wind blew hard at intervals, with rain and lightning that flashed along the coast, and pealing thunder.\* At daylight he returned on board; none of the crews that had fled into harbour from the storm brought tidings of Shelley's boat. "They either knew nothing," writes Trelawny, "or would say nothing. My Genoese, with the quick eye of a sailor, pointed out, on board a fishing-boat, an English-made oar that he thought he had seen in Shelley's boat, but the entire crew swore by all the saints in the calendar that this was not so." A period of anxious suspense followed. On the morning of the third day, Trelawny rode to Pisa, called at the Lanfranchi Palace, inquired whether a letter had been received from the Casa Magni, and was informed that there was none. "I told my fears to Hunt," he writes, "and then went upstairs to Byron. When I told him, his lip quivered, and his voice faltered as he questioned me. I sent a courier to Leghorn to despatch the *Bolívar* to cruise along the coast, whilst I mounted my horse and rode in the same direction. I also despatched a courier along the coast to go as far as Nice."

Meanwhile at Casa Magni anxiety was growing to alarm.† During the days of Shelley's visit to Leghorn and Pisa, Mary

caught in the storm when five or six miles from the Bay of Spezzia. He observed one sail, and only one, to leeward, and inferred, from her rig and the whiteness of her canvas, that she was an English pleasure-boat. A fierce gust came, blackening the water, and blotted out the boat in storm-mist.

\* A vivid description of the magnificent thunderstorm of that night, as seen from the Palazzo Niccolini, Florence, will be found in "Personal and Literary Memorials," by the author of "Four Years in France" [Rev. H. Best], pp. 390, 391. On this night, Mrs. Mason dreamed that Shelley came to her, looking very pale and melancholy. "You look ill and tired; sit down and eat," she said. "No," he replied, "I shall never eat more; I have not a soldo left in the world." "Nonsense," said she; "this is no inn; you need not pay." "Perhaps," he answered, "it is the worse for that." Then she awoke, and, sleeping again, dreamt that Shelley was dead, and awoke crying bitterly. She mentioned her dreams next day to her servant, saying she hoped all was well with the Shelleys.

† What follows is from Mary Shelley's letter to Mrs. Gisborne, August 15, 1822,

was slowly regaining strength; but she could not recover her cheerfulness or serenity. When Jane Williams and Claire took their evening walk, she would patrol the terrace, "oppressed with wretchedness, yet gazing on the most beautiful scene in the world." It was in the summer that William died; again a summer had come, and one of excessive heats; was little Percy's life more secure than William's had been? She reminded her trembling heart of the love, peace, competence, which she enjoyed; but tears filled her eyes. "Yet I thought when he, when my Shelley returns, I shall be happy—he will comfort me; if my boy be ill, he will restore him and encourage me. . . . Thus a week past. On Monday, Sth, Jane had a letter from Edward dated Saturday; he said that he waited at Leghorn for Shelley, who was at Pisa; that Shelley's return was certain; 'but,' he continued, 'if he should not come by Monday, I will come in a felucca, and you may expect me on Thursday evening at furthest.'

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"This was Monday, the fatal Monday, but with us it was stormy all day, and we did not at all suppose that they could put to sea. At twelve at night we had a thunderstorm. Tuesday it rained all day and was calm—the sky wept on their graves. On Wednesday, the wind was fair from Leghorn, and in the evening several feluccas arrived thence. One brought word they had sailed Monday, but we did not believe them. Thursday was another day of fair wind, and when twelve at night came, and we did not see the tall sails of the little boat double the promontory before us, we began to fear, not the truth, but some illness, some disagreeable news for their detention.

"Jane got so uneasy that she determined to proceed the next day to Leghorn in a boat to see what was the matter. Friday came, and with it a heavy sea and bad wind. Jane, however, resolved to be rowed to Leghorn, since no boat could sail, and busied herself in preparations. I wished her to wait for letters, since Friday was letter-day. She would not, but

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the sea detained her; the swell rose so that no boat would venture out. At twelve at noon our letters came; there was one from Hunt to Shelley; it said, 'Pray write to tell us how you got home, for they say that you had bad weather after you sailed on Monday, and we are anxious.' The paper fell from me. I trembled all over. Jane read it. 'Then it is all over!' she said. 'No, my dear Jane,' I cried, 'it is not all over, but this suspense is dreadful. Come with me—we will go to Leghorn; we will post, to be swift and learn our fate.'

"We crossed to Lerici, despair in our hearts; they raised our spirits there by telling us that no accident had been heard of, and that it must have been known, etc. But still our fear was great, and without resting we posted to Pisa. It must have been fearful to see us—two poor, wild, aghast creatures, driving (like Matilda\*) towards the sea to learn if we were to be for ever doomed to misery. I knew that Hunt was at Pisa, at Lord Byron's house, but I thought that Lord Byron was at Leghorn. I settled that we should drive to Casa Lanfranchi, that I should get out and ask the fearful question of Hunt, 'Do you know anything of Shelley?' On entering Pisa, the idea of seeing Hunt for the first time for four years under such circumstances, and asking him such a question, was so terrific to me that it was with difficulty that I prevented myself from going into convulsions. My struggles were dreadful. They knocked at the door, and some one called out, 'Chi è?' It was the Guiccioli's maid. Lord Byron was in Pisa. Hunt was in bed, so I was to see Lord Byron instead of him. This was a great relief to me. I staggered upstairs; the Guiccioli came to meet me smiling, while I could hardly say, 'Where is he—Sapete alcuna cosa di Shelley?' They knew nothing; he had left Pisa on Sunday; on Monday, he had sailed; there had been bad weather Monday afternoon; more they knew not.

"Both Lord Byron and the lady have told me since that

\* An allusion, I believe, to an unpublished tale by Maria Gisborne.

on that terrific evening I looked more like a ghost than a woman; light seemed to emanate from my features, my face was very white, I looked like marble. Alas, I had risen almost from a bed of sickness for this journey. I had travelled all day; it was now twelve at night, and we, refusing to rest, proceeded to Leghorn—not in despair—no, for then we must have died, but with sufficient hope to keep up the agitation of the spirits which was all my life. It was past two in the morning when we arrived. They took us to the wrong inn; neither Trelawny or Captain Roberts were there, nor did we exactly know where they were, so we were obliged to wait until daylight. We threw ourselves drest on our beds, and slept a little, but at six o'clock we went to one or two inns to ask for one or the other of these gentlemen. We found Roberts at the Globe. He came down to us with a face which seemed to tell us that the worst was true, and here we learned all that had occurred during the week they had been absent from us, and under what circumstances they had departed on their return.”

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Yet all hope was not extinct. The boat might have been blown to Corsica or Elba, and, not knowing the coast, they might have sailed still further. It was said that they had been seen in the Gulf. “We resolved to return,” Mary Shelley continues, “with all possible speed; we sent a courier to go from tower to tower along the coast to know if anything had been seen or found; and at nine a.m. we quitted Leghorn, stopped but one moment at Pisa, and proceeded towards Lerici. When at two miles from Via Reggio we rode down to that town to know if they knew anything. Here our calamity first began to break on us. A little boat and a water-cask had been found five miles off. They had manufactured a *piccolissima lancia* of thin planks stitched by a shoemaker, just to let them run on shore without wetting themselves, as our boat drew four feet of water. The description of that found tallied with this; but then this boat was very cumber-

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some, and in bad weather they might have been easily led to throw it overboard. The cask frightened me most; but the same reason might in some sort be given for that. I must tell you that Jane and I were not now alone. Trelawny accompanied us back to our home. We journeyed on, and reached the Magra about half-past ten p.m. I cannot describe to you what I felt in the first moment when, fording this river, I felt the water splash about our wheels. I was suffocated. I gasped for breath. I thought I should have gone into convulsions, and I struggled violently that Jane might not perceive it. Looking down the river I saw two great lights burning at the *foce*; a voice from within me seemed to cry aloud, 'That is his grave.'

"After passing the river I gradually recovered. Arriving at Lerici we were obliged to cross our little bay in a boat. San Terenzo was illuminated for a festa. What a scene! The waving sea, the scirocco wind, the lights of the town towards which we rowed, and our own desolate hearts, that coloured all with a shroud. We landed; nothing had been heard of them. This was Saturday, July 13, and thus we waited until Thursday, July 25 [an error for July 18\*], thrown about by hope and fear. We sent messengers along the coast towards Genoa and to Via Reggio—nothing had been found more than the *lancetta*. Reports were brought us; we hoped; and yet to tell you all the agony we endured during those twelve days [an error for *six*] would be to make you conceive a universe of pain, each moment intolerable and giving place to one still worse. The people of the country,

\* A careful scrutiny of all the documents leaves no doubt that Mrs. Shelley, still confused in mind, though writing with such seeming exactness, erred by an entire week. She had lost count of time. An official document, given in a translation in the appendix to Trelawny's "Records," proves that Shelley's body was cast on shore on July 18. A letter of Leigh Hunt to his sister-in-law in England, dated "Pisa, July 20, 1820," mentions that the bodies had been thrown up by the sea. Again, a letter of Leigh Hunt to Mary Shelley, dated "Monday, July 21, 1822" [an error for Monday, July 22], shows that Mary had left Casa Magni, and was in Pisa on that day.

too, added to one's discomfort; they are like wild savages. On festas, the men and women and children in different bands—the sexes always separate—pass the whole night in dancing on the sands close to our door, running into the sea, then back again, and screaming all the time one detestable air—the most detestable in the world. Then the scirocco perpetually blew, and the sea for ever moaned their dirge. On Thursday, 25th [an error for 18th], Trelawny left us to go to Leghorn to see what was doing or what could be done. On Friday [the 19th], I was very ill, but as evening came on I said to Jane, 'If anything had been found on the coast, Trelawny would have returned to let us know. He has not returned, so I hope.' About seven o'clock p.m. he did return. All was over; all was quiet now; they had been found washed on shore."

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Two bodies, some three or four miles apart, had been found upon the beach; one near Via Reggio, in the Duchy of Lucca, the other in Tuscan territory. The latter, found on July 16 or 17, had been buried in the sand thirty hours before Trelawny's arrival at the spot. The former, cast ashore on the 18th, was seen by him on the following day. The parts of the body not protected by clothing were fleshless. "The tall slight figure," writes Trelawny, "the jacket, the volume of Sophocles \* in one pocket, and Keats's poems in the other, doubled back as if the reader, in the act of reading, had hastily thrust it away, were all too familiar to me to leave a doubt on my mind that this mutilated corpse was any other than Shelley's." The body of Williams was much more mutilated; "it had no other covering than the shreds of a shirt, and that partly drawn over the head, as if the wearer had been in the act of taking it off, a black silk handkerchief

\* The "Sophocles" of Trelawny's "Recollections" (1858) is changed to "Æschylus" in his "Records" (1878). Mr. Garnett, in his article on "Shelley's Last Days," also says "Æschylus." In August, 1886, I had in my hands the volume preserved at Boscombe Manor as that found in Shelley's pocket, and I made certain that that volume is Sophocles. It has been stated that the volume of Keats's poems was doubled back at "The Eve of St. Agnes."



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tied sailor-fashion round the neck, socks, and one boot, indicating also that he had attempted to strip. . . . It was not until three weeks after the wreck of the boat that a third body was found—four miles from the other two. This I concluded to be that of the sailor-boy Charles Vivian, although it was a mere skeleton, and impossible to be identified. It was buried in the sand, above the reach of the waves.”\*

“Is there no hope?” Mary Shelley inquired of Trelawny, after a dreadful interval of silence, when on Friday, July 19, he reappeared unexpectedly at Casa Magni. He could not answer, but left the room and sent the servant with the children to the two widowed women. Next day (July 20) he conducted them from the hearing of the waves to Pisa, where they might have the comfort of Hunt’s companionship. The body of Shelley’s beloved boy lay in the cemetery at Rome; and Mary recalled to mind the stanzas of “Adonais” which tell of its living beauty in the midst of sorrow. There all that was earthly of her dearest one should rest. Unhappily, a difficulty arose from the strict quarantine laws of the Italian coast, which forbade that bodies cast upon the shore, and buried in quicklime amid the sands, should be disinterred. By the exertions of Trelawny and the kindly aid of Mr. Dawkins, English *chargé d'affaires* at Florence, the permission of the authorities for the removal of the bodies was obtained.† It had occurred to the friends of Shelley and Williams that if the bodies were consumed by fire upon the sands, and only the ashes preserved, all objection arising from the quarantine laws would cease, and that the subsequent difficulties as to reburial would be diminished. The form of permission, however, obtained by Trelawny and presented to the Governor

\* In a letter to Leigh Hunt, Miss Clairmont informs him of a report of July 14 that the bodies had been found three miles from Via Reggio.

† The words of Mr. Dawkins, in a letter to Trelawny, have a manly English ring, and ought not to be forgotten: “Do not mention trouble; I am here to take as much as my countrymen think proper to give me; and all I ask in return is fair play and good humour.”

of the Tower of Migliarino, at the Bocca Lericcio, made no mention of the intended burning of the bodies, and it needed some little persuasion to obtain his consent.

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An iron furnace of the dimensions of a human body had been made at Leghorn under Trelawny's direction. He had also ordered two small boxes of oak, about the size of writing-desks, lined with black velvet, having a brass plate affixed to each, setting forth in Latin the name, age, country, and fate of the deceased. On August 14,\* Trelawny, with an English friend, Captain Shenley, sailed from Leghorn in the *Bolivar*, and after a tedious passage of ten or eleven hours, anchored off Via Reggio. Having landed, and arranged with the officer in command of the Tower of Migliarino, he despatched a letter to Byron at Pisa, informing him and Hunt that all was ready for noon on the following day. By that hour, on August 15, he stood upon the beach where lay the body of Edward Williams, some eighteen paces from the breaking surf. A squad of soldiers in working dresses, armed with mattocks and spades, under the superintendence of a quarantine officer, was at hand. Byron and Shenley, accompanied by an officer with foot soldiers and some dismounted dragoons, soon joined him. A considerable group of spectators from the neighbourhood stood at a little distance. The gnarled root of a pine tree marked the spot where the body lay. Fuel had been brought, but needlessly, for driftwood on the beach and timber fallen from a stunted pine-forest close at hand would have afforded an abundant supply.† "The heat was intense, the sand being so scorched as to render standing on it painful. Mr. Shenley and myself were occupied with the soldiers in

\* Trelawny says August 13, but it seems certain that the burning of Williams's body took place on the 15th, and that it took place on the day after Trelawny's departure from Leghorn. In what follows I borrow freely from Trelawny, but I cannot always use marks of quotation, as I condense, and do not always use the precise words.

† What follows is not from Trelawny's published volumes, but from the account written by him soon after the event, which varies in some particulars from the later version.

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clearing away the sand, and we anxiously watched the first appearance of the body. I first pulled out a black silk handkerchief, then a collar of a shirt, which from its peculiarity I knew to be my friend's, and a boot, which we compared with one brought for the occasion, and which removed every doubt. . . . Lord Byron had often declared he could recognize Williams by the form and peculiarities of his teeth; he examined the jaw, and said that, had nothing else remained, he would have sworn to his identification. Having now made a funeral pile with fagots all around and green branches on the top, I set fire to it. Lord Byron, Mr. Leigh Hunt, Mr. Shenley, and myself gathered round, throwing on it frankincense, salt, and wine.

"Lord Byron, looking at the shapeless, limbless mass, as it was taken from its sandy grave, said, 'What is a human body? Why, it might be the rotten carcase of a sheep for all I can distinguish;' and further continued, pointing to the black handkerchief, 'Look, an old rag retains its form longer than he who wore it! What a humble and degrading thought, that we shall one day resemble this!' He then pointed out the peculiar appearance of the flames at this moment. The body and skull, which burned fiercely, gave them a silvery and wavy look of indescribable brightness and purity." "Let us try the strength of these waters that drowned our friends," said Byron. "How far do you think they were when their boat sank?" He stripped and swam from shore, with Shenley and Trelawny as his companions in the waters. "Before we got a mile out, Byron was sick and persuaded to return to the shore. My companion, too, was seized with cramp, and reached the land by my aid." At half-past three, nothing was left of the funeral pile, except a quantity of blackish-looking ashes, mingled with white and broken fragments of bones. These were placed in the oaken box, and consigned to the care of Byron and Hunt.

Next day (August 16), the ceremony was repeated for the

body of Shelley at a spot three or four miles nearer to the Gulf of Spezzia. Again Hunt and Byron were present, having driven hither in a carriage; again the Health Officer and the soldiers, among them on this second occasion some mounted dragoons. The people from the surrounding district flocked in crowds to witness so strange a spectacle. "The sea, with the islands of Gorgona, Capraja, and Elba, was before us; old battlemented watch-towers stretched along the coast, backed by the marble-crested Apennines glistening in the sun, picturesque from their diversified outlines; and not a human dwelling was in sight." Three white wands stuck in the yellow sand from low-water to high-water mark indicated, but not with precision, the place of burial. An hour of silent toil went past before they had discovered the lime in which the body lay concealed; suddenly a mattock with a dull hollow sound struck the skull, causing a general shudder, while the men drew back. The furnace being placed and surrounded by wood, the remains were removed from their shallow resting-place. It was Byron's wish that the skull, which was of unusual beauty, should be preserved; but it almost instantly fell to pieces.\* Of the volume of Keats's poems which had been buried with Shelley's body, only the binding remained, and this was cast upon the pyre. Although the fire was greater than that of the preceding day, the body was but slowly consumed. Three hours elapsed before it separated; it then fell open across the breast; the heart, which was unusually large, seemed impregnable to the fire. Trelawny plunged his hand into the flames and snatched this relic from the burning. The day was one of wide autumnal calm and beauty. "The Mediterranean," says Leigh Hunt, "now soft and lucid, kissed the shore as if to make peace with it. The yellow sand and blue sky were intensely contrasted with one another; marble mountains touched the air with coolness; and the flame of the fire bore away towards heaven in vigorous amplitude, wavering and quivering with

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\* I follow the earlier written account by Trelawny.

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a brightness of inconceivable beauty." During the whole funeral ceremony a solitary sea-bird crossing and recrossing the pile was the only intruder that baffled the vigilance of the guard.

Byron, who could not face the scene, had swum off to his yacht. Leigh Hunt looked on from the carriage. Having cooled the furnace in the sea, Trelawny collected the fragments of bones and the ashes, and deposited them in the oaken box. All was over. Byron and Hunt returned to Pisa in their carriage. Shenley and Trelawny, bearing the oaken coffer, went on board the *Bolivar*. The relics of Shelley's heart, given soon after by Trelawny to Hunt, were, at Mary Shelley's urgent request, supported by the entreaty of Mrs. Williams, confided to Mary's hands. After her death, in a copy of the Pisa edition of "Adonais," at the page which tells how death is swallowed up in immortality, was found under a silken covering the embrowned ashes, now shrunk and withered, which she had secretly treasured.

When the *Bolivar* arrived off Via Reggio on August 14, she fell in with two small vessels hired by Trelawny at Leghorn for the purpose of ascertaining, by the means used to recover sunken vessels, the spot at which Shelley's boat had foundered. They had on board the captain of a felucca, in which Roberts had observed several spars belonging to the *Ariel*. The captain declared that he had seen the *Ariel* at the moment of her disappearance; it was four in the afternoon, the boy was at masthead, when thwart winds struck the sails; they had looked away for an instant, and looking again the boat was gone. They could not, said the captain, get near her, and passing three quarters of an hour later over the spot where they had seen her, no wreck was visible.\* For six days Trelawny's sailors dragged the bottom, and at length succeeded in ascertaining the position of the foundered boat, about two miles off the coast of Via Reggio, but were unable

\* Trelawny tells how the Genoese mate of the *Bolivar*, on the night of July 8 or morning of the 9th, noticed on board a fishing-boat an oar which, he thought, belonged to Shelley's boat.

to bring her up. When, in September, Captain Roberts raised her from ten or fifteen fathoms of water, his first impression was that she had been swamped by a heavy sea; it was evident, from the position in which things were found in her, that she had not capsized. The two masts were carried away just above the board, the bowsprit broken off close to the bows, the gunwale stove in, and the hull half full of blue clay. A closer examination showed that many of the timbers on the starboard quarter were broken, which led Roberts to infer that she had been run down by a felucca in the squall.\* At Leghorn this was the received opinion; but it has been suggested by Peacock that during the dredging operations so light a craft may have been seriously injured. "Among the various conjectures respecting this lamentable event," writes Leigh Hunt, "a suspicion was not wanting that the boat had been run down by a larger one with a view to plunder it. Mr. Shelley was known to have taken money on board. Crimes of that nature had occurred often enough to warrant such a suspicion." In 1875, it was stated by Sir Vincent Eyre, writing in the *Times*, that an old fisherman who had died twelve years before at Sarzana confessed to a priest that he was one of five who, seeing the English boat in great danger, ran her down, thinking that Byron was on board, and that they should find gold. Sir Vincent Eyre's informant, a lady living in a

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\* Mary Shelley wrote to Mrs. Gisborne from Albaro on May 3, 1823, as follows: "Captain Roberts (Jane will tell you who he is) is just come from Rome. . . . Roberts has bought the hulk of that miserable boat—new rigged her even with higher masts than before. He has sailed with her at the rate of eight knots an hour, and on such occasions tried various experiments—hazardous ones—to discover how the catastrophe that closed the scene for poor Jane and myself happened. It is plain to every eye she was run down from behind. On bringing her up from fifteen fathoms, all was in her—books, telescope, ballast—lying on each side of the boat without any appearance of shifting or confusion; the top-sails furled, topmast lowered; the false stern (Jane will explain) broken to pieces, and a great hole knocked in the stern timbers. When she was brought to Leghorn, every one went to see her, and the same exclamation was uttered by all, 'She was run down'—by that wretched fishing-boat, which owned that it had seen them." Roberts had the boat decked, but she proved unseaworthy, and became a wreck on one of the Ionian islands.

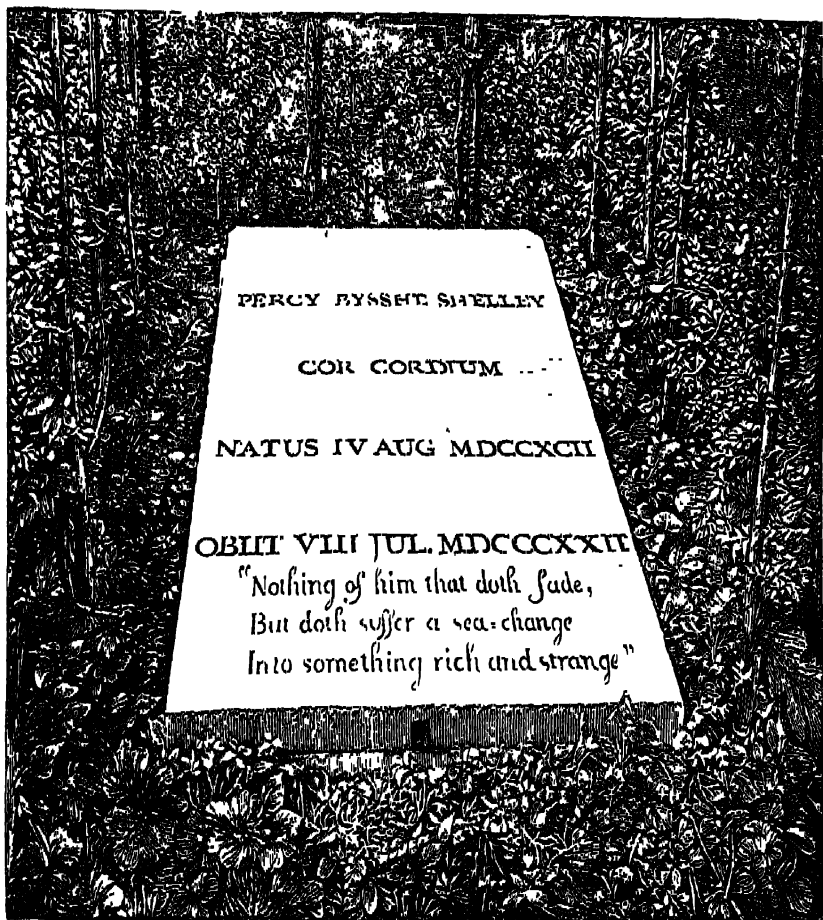
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villa overlooking the Bay of Spezzia, had heard the story from an Italian nobleman to whom it had been communicated by the priest. This account was accepted by Trelawny as solving that which for half a century had been to him a mystery. We know too well how such a story as that of the fisherman and the priest may come into existence without the slightest foundation in fact. "The Italian sailors," it has been well observed, "could not have attacked Shelley's boat in broad day, amongst the many small craft scattered about; and the subsequent darkness and tempest . . . would, one have thought, have given them enough to do to take care of themselves. On the whole, it seems most probable that the collision, if collision there was, was accidental."\* We are not over-curious to penetrate that tempestuous mist which veiled Shelley's boat. He had often contemplated death, and its terror had been subdued to a solemn awe. "Are you going to join your friend Plato?" were almost the last words written to Shelley by Jane Williams. It was thus that he thought of death, hoping that death itself, like this life of ours, might be but part of the inwoven design, glad and sad, on that veil which hides from us some high reality. Williams, who could swim, though not well, had made a struggle for his life. Shelley probably accepted the inevitable with an instant comprehension that the end had come—the end, or the beginning. He had often declared, says Trelawny, that "in case of wreck he would vanish instantly, and not imperil valuable lives by permitting others to aid in saving his, which he looked upon as valueless."

The casket or coffer containing Shelley's ashes was entrusted by Trelawny to a Mr. Grant, of Leghorn, who consigned it to Mr. Freeborn, a merchant correspondent of his at Rome, who also seems to have held the position of English Consul in that city.† By December 7, 1822, Mr. Freeborn

\* Mr. R. Garnett, in his article "Shelley's Last Days."

† Leigh Hunt, 'in a letter to Severn, dated "Genoa, December 16, 1822," mentions these facts, but does not call Freeborn the English Consul at Rome.



PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

COR CORINTHUM

NATUS IV AUG MDCCXCII

OBLIT VIII JUL MDCCCXXII

"Nothing of him that doth fade,  
But doth suffer a sea-change  
Into something rich and strange"

IN THE CEMETERY AT ROME.





had received the casket. The old Protestant burial-ground, where lay the body of Shelley's boy, having been closed, the casket, incased in a coffin, was placed in the new cemetery hard by. To quiet the authorities the usual ceremonies were observed. They sought for the body of the child to place it near his father's ashes, but it could not be found. All was done, says Severn, "as by the hands of friends." Among the few persons who were present at the burial were General Cockburn, Sir C. Sykes, Severn, Kirkup, Westmacott, Scoles, Freeborn, and the Revs. W. Cook and Burgess.

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Visiting Rome in the spring of 1823, Trelawny found Shelley's grave amid a cluster of others. "The old Roman wall," he writes, "partly enclosed the place, and there was a niche in the wall formed by two buttresses—immediately under an ancient pyramid, said to be the tomb of Caius Cestius. There were no graves near it at that time. This suited my taste, so I purchased the recess, and sufficient space for planting a row of the Italian upright cypresses. . . . There was no 'faculty' to apply for, nor bishop's licence to exhume the body. The *custode*, or guardian, who dwelt within the enclosure, and had the key of the gate, seemed to have uncontrolled power within his domain, and scudi, impressed with the image of Saint Peter with the two keys, ruled him. Without more ado masons were hired, and two tombs built in the recess. In one of these when completed I deposited the box with Shelley's ashes, and covered it with solid stone, inscribed with a Latin epitaph, written by Leigh Hunt." The words inscribed upon the stone are the following:—

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY  
COR CORDIUM  
NATUS IV AUG. MDCCXCIII  
OBIT VIII JUL. MDCCCXXII

"Nothing of him that doth fade  
But doth suffer a sea-change  
Into something rich and strange."

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 XII resting-place. The lines from Shakespeare's "Tempest" were  
 Apr.-July, added by him to the words of Leigh Hunt's choice, "Cor  
 1822. Cordium."

Mary Shelley returned to England in the autumn of 1823. On February 21, 1851, she died. Shelley's son, Percy Florence, succeeded to the baronetcy on the death of his grandfather in April, 1844. In the monument, by Weekes, which Sir Percy and Lady Shelley have erected in the noble parish church of Christchurch, Hants, the feeling of Mary's heart, confided to the pages of her journal after her husband's death, is translated into monumental marble. In Boscombe Manor, Bournemouth, in an alcove devoted to that purpose, the portraits, relics, journals, note-books, and letters of Shelley and Mary, duly ordered by Lady Shelley's hands, are preserved with love and reverence. The murmur of pine woods, and the resonance and silvery flash of the waves of our English sea, are near to solemnize and to gladden the heart.

NOTE.—It is perhaps worth noting that in the *Examiner* of June and July three articles by Leigh Hunt were printed in defence of "Prometheus Unbound," which had been severely criticised in the *Quarterly Review*. The last of these articles appeared on the day before Shelley's death.

Mary Shelley had, as it were, rehearsed in imagination the great tragic scene of her life, when telling of the loss on shipboard of Euthanasia, the heroine of her novel "Valperga."



TO THE MEMORY OF  
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

POET.  
BORN AT FIELD PLACE IN THE COUNTY OF SUSSEX AUGUST 4. 1792.  
DIED IN THE EXERCISING OF HIS BOAT IN THE GULF OF SPEZZA A JULY 1822.  
HIS ASHES ARE DEPOSITED IN THE PROTETANT BURIAL GROUND IN ROME.

ALSO THE WORKS OF HIS  
POETRY AND PROSE WRITINGS IN TWO VOLUMES.  
LONDON: J. JOHNSON, ST. PAULS CHURCH-YARD. 1822.

HE HAD OUT-BOARDED THE SHAD-  
DOWS OF CALUMNY AND HATE  
AND LET UNDER WHIPPING AND  
CAN TORN HIMSELF AND TORT  
FROM THE CONTACT OF THE  
SERIES SECURE-AND LAY CAN A  
A HEAD T'GROWN GOLD-A HEAD  
WON THE SOFTLY-SELF  
PARLESS A LIES LOAD A

OF OUR NIT  
ND PAIN.  
MUSICAL DOWNT  
NG NOT AGAC  
WOLD A BLA  
STAIN  
CROWN CROWN  
UNLAMENT'D URM.



## APPENDIX A.

### *Shelley's Ancestry.*

SHELLEY's pedigree, traced back to Henry Shelley, of Worminghurst, co. Sussex, Esq., who died in December, 1623, is given by Mr. Forman in the first volume of Shelley's Prose Works. I need not reprint it here. The Shelleys of the eighteenth and seventeenth centuries for several generations were gentlefolk of Sussex, whose highest distinction it is to have been ancestors of a great English poet. It may be worth while to trace the ancestry from father to son some way back from the point at which the pedigree printed by Mr. Forman stops short. Some authorities carry, or endeavour to carry, the pedigree to five generations before Sir Thomas Shelley, who was ambassador to Spain in 1205. I shall be content with Berry's more modest statement.

Sir William Shelley, Lord of Affendary  
(brother of Sir Thomas Shelley that was  
attainted for endeavouring to set  
up King Richard II.).

Robert Shelly  
(buried at St. Dunstan's Church).

= Elizabeth, dau. and co-heir of  
Sir John Petitt, 1421.

John Shellie, M.P. for Rye,  
co. Sussex, in 1415, 1420, 1421, 1423.

= Beatrix, dau. and heir of  
John Hawkwood, the renowned  
soldier.

Sir John Shelly, of Michelgrove, Kt.,  
ob. 3 Jan. 1526.

= Elizabeth, dau. and heir of  
John Michelgrove, ob. 30 June,  
1518, at Clapham.

Edward Shelley, of Worminghurst,

= Joan, dau. and heir of Paul Eden  
(Iden?), of Penshurst, co. Kent.

Henry Shelley, of Worminghurst  
(living 1565).

= Ann, dau. and heir of  
Richard Sackville, of Chepsted,  
co. Surrey.

Henry Shelley, of Worminghurst,  
ob. Dec. 1623.

Elizabeth Michelgrove's mother was a Sidney. It is not quite certain, I believe, whether Beatrix Shelley was daughter or granddaughter of Sir John Hawkwood. Edward Shelley, of Worminghurst, was Master of the Household to Henry VIII., Edward VI., and Queen Mary. He died 1554. Sir William Shelley, of Michelgrove, Judge of the Common Pleas, and Sir John Shelley, Knight of St. John, were his brothers. The Roman Catholic Shelleys were of the Michelgrove branch. In State Papers (Domestic), is a memorandum stating that there are genealogical notes by Lord Burghley on the descent of the Shelley family to the death of Henry Shelley in 1585. These were probably taken for reference during the "Shelley Case," which arose from a technical error in the settlement of the Worminghurst property (late the lands of the monastery of Sion) given to Edward Shelley.

I may note here that Elizabeth Jane Sidney Perry, who became Bysshe Shelley's second (or perhaps third) wife, was granddaughter of Colonel Sidney and great-niece of the last Earl Leicester, who was himself a descendant of Sir Henry Sidney (father of Sir Philip Sidney of the "Arcadia") through Robert, his second son.\*

The original arms of the Shelley family were three escallops, sable; the elder branch changed them in the time of King Edward II. to the present arms: sable, a fesse engrailed between three whelk-shells or, a mullet for difference. Crest, a griffin's head erased ar., beaked and ducally gorged or. The motto, "Fey e Fidaglia."

More information will be found by those who desire it in Horsfield's "Sussex;" Dallaway and Cartwright's "Rape of Bramber;" Sussex Archæolog. Collections; Nichols's "Bibliotheca Topograph. Brit.;" Field's "Our Sussex Ancestors;" Robinson and Elwes' "Mansions and Castles of Western Sussex."

\* It will be noted, therefore, that while Sir John Shelley Sidney is of the same blood as Sir Philip, Elizabeth's favourite, he is not descended from Sir Philip.

## APPENDIX B.

### *Letters from Mrs. Godwin to Lady Mountcashell.*

WHEN writing my account of the events of the years 1814-15, I had before me copies of letters addressed by Mrs. Godwin to Lady Mountcashell, the substance of which I did not embody in my narrative for two reasons. First, I was able to convict Mrs. Godwin of deliberate dishonesty of statement in several important matters; and I knew that she wrote under the influence of feelings which would probably lead her to a perversion of the truth. I feared, therefore, to trust any statement coming from her pen, unless I could confirm it by some independent evidence. Secondly, the copies made by Miss Clairmont are evidently in some degree unfaithful to their originals, and we cannot say with certainty or precision how far that unfaithfulness extends. She stated that the letters were given to her by Lady Mountcashell in 1832. If so, perhaps she destroyed them; perhaps they were given and afterwards returned; they are not known by me to exist. An earlier and a later copy in Miss Clairmont's handwriting lie before me. The earlier exhibits certain passages in the process of being composed or recomposed by Miss Clairmont, the text, as she designed it to stand, emerging from a tangle of cancelled words and phrases, alterations, interlineations. Yet I have little doubt that in many parts it presents with tolerable fidelity what Mrs. Godwin wrote. The later copy varies in a good many passages from the earlier, yet in general agrees with it. The evidence leads one to believe that where the transcriber desired to omit or alter any statement, or any word or phrase, or to insert anything, she did not hesitate to do so; but that in general no ground or motive existed for such alteration; so that her transcript may be accepted as representing the original in essentials. Still it is very far from possessing the authority of an original document.



I now proceed to lay before the reader the contents of Mrs. Godwin's letters, following the earlier copy and the earlier readings in that copy.

*Letter I.* (dated 41, Skinner Street, August 7, 1814\*) informs Lady Mountcashell that a great misfortune has befallen the Godwins—Mary and Claire disappeared on July 28. From inquiries in the neighbourhood it was ascertained that they had been carried off in a post-chaise and four by Shelley. "We have reason to think they have fled to Italy." Should they come to see you, do your utmost to get Claire into your possession and to persuade her to leave Shelley and Mary.

*Letter II.* (dated September 2, which is cancelled; August 16, cancelled; and August 20, 1814). There are many variations between the two copies. "About last November it was, I think, when I wrote to you that our prospects had brightened, for that Mr. Shelley, a young man who will one day have a large fortune and who is a great admirer of Mr. Godwin, had given us assistance to pay off part of our debts and had promised more. He used to visit us frequently with his wife, a beautiful and charming young lady of about nineteen. We grew very intimate; they came when they liked, and made themselves quite at home, and we all loved them extremely. They took a house at Bracknell, near our friends, Madame de Boinville and her family. Mrs. Shelley remained greatly at home, but Mr. Shelley was busy with lawyers about borrowing money, and ran up and down to and from town, and took a lodging in Hatton Garden, in order to be near us." Mary at this time, Mrs. Godwin goes on to say, was at Dundee with the Baxters; Claire was at school at Walham Green. So there were only Frances and Willy at home. Shelley paid immense attentions to Frances. Mrs. Godwin after a time saw things, though she could hardly say what—glances, sighing, gazing. Frances, from being cheerful, grew dull and heavy. The indications were too slight to justify Mrs. Godwin in supposing that Shelley was in love with Frances—he, with such a lovely wife and living on such affectionate terms with her—but she feared that Frances might, unconsciously to herself, receive a deep impression in his favour. Accordingly, she sent Frances on a visit to her aunts in Dublin. As soon as she was gone, Shelley's manner to Mrs. Godwin, which

\* *Letter II.* refers to Mrs. Godwin's note of the 14th, as preparing Lady Mountcashell for what follows. I think it likely that "August 7" is an error. It may be noted that "Claire" is used throughout; but Mrs. Godwin's name for her daughter was Jane.

had been friendly, became hostile. Claire came home for the Christmas holidays, and Shelley took much to her like a brother to his younger sister. He read Italian with her, and took her to walk everywhere with him, for it was a mood of his never to go out alone if he could help it.

[I interrupt Mrs. Godwin's narrative to note a few points. Fanny Godwin, on May 23, went to Wales. I believe that she did not go to Ireland. During the months in which Shelley is represented by Mrs. Godwin as languishing in the presence of Fanny, his visits to Godwin's house, carefully noted in Godwin's diary, were as follows: In January, no visit to Godwin's house; in February, no visit; on March 7, Shelley dined with Godwin, and next day he breakfasted and dined; on March 23, Shelley called on Godwin. In April, Shelley was not once at Godwin's house. On May 5, he dined; May 6, 13, and 23, he called. On May 23, Fanny departed for Pentredevy. These facts may help us to judge of the truth of Mrs. Godwin's story.] "In May," Mrs. Godwin goes on, "Mary came home from Scotland, and then began all our troubles. [Mary came home March 30, three weeks before Fanny left for Wales.] He paid her the most devoted attentions, and my husband spoke to him on the subject. Mr. S—— declared that it was only his manner with all women. Shortly after, Harriet Shelley came up from Bracknell suddenly, and saw me and my husband alone. She was very much agitated, and wept, poor dear young lady, a great deal, because Mr. Shelley had told her yesterday at Bracknell that he was desperately in love with Mary Godwin. She implored us to forbid him our house and prevent his seeing Mary. She related that last November he had fallen in love with Mrs. Turner, Madame de Boinville's daughter, and paid her such marked attentions Mr. Turner, the husband, had carried off his wife to Devonshire. [This is omitted in the second copy of the letters. In the first, 'last November' is substituted for 'at Christmas,' which is cancelled. Claire remembered that Shelley had been represented as teaching herself Italian during her Christmas holidays. But, unluckily for this story, Shelley during November was in Edinburgh. If Turner carried off his wife to Devonshire, he brought her back, and Shelley was staying with her and her mother on terms of cordial intimacy in March, 1814.] We sympathized with her, and she went away contented, feeling, as she said, quite sure that, not seeing Mary, he would forget her. We then spoke to Mary on the subject, and she behaved as well as possible—approved our renouncing his acquaintance, and wrote a few lines to Harriet

to pray her not to be unhappy, as she would not see Mr. S—— again.”\* [Shelley’s visits to Skinner Street ceased on July 7. Harriet did not call at Godwin’s until after she had come, at Shelley’s request, to London from Bath on the 14th, as shown by Godwin’s diary. She and Shelley called on the 15th.] Godwin being ill, the letter goes on to say, Mrs. Godwin wrote to Shelley begging him to discontinue his visits. [As a fact, Godwin himself, as shown by his diary, wrote immediately to Shelley.] A week of tranquility followed. Then, one day when Godwin was out, Shelley suddenly entered the shop and went upstairs. “I perceived him from the counting-house and hastened after him, and overtook him at the schoolroom door. I entreated him not to enter. He looked extremely wild. He pushed me aside with extreme violence, and entering, walked straight to Mary. ‘They wish to separate us, my beloved; but Death shall unite us,’ and offered her a bottle of laudanum. ‘By this you can escape from tyranny; and this,’ taking a small pistol from his pocket, ‘shall reunite me to you.’ Poor Mary turned as pale as a ghost, and my poor silly Claire, who is so timid even at trifles, at the sight of the pistol filled the room with her shrieks. I was also much alarmed, and hastened to my husband’s study, where Mr. Marshall was sitting awaiting to dine with us. He hastened upstairs, and I know not very well what he said, but whatever it was it had influence, or perhaps it was poor Mary’s entreaties. With the tears streaming down her cheeks, she entreated him to calm himself and to go home. She told us afterwards she believed she said to him, ‘I won’t take this laudanum; but if you will only be reasonable and calm, I will promise to be ever faithful to you.’ This seemed to calm him, and he left the house, leaving the phial of laudanum on the table.” Another week passed. Mrs. Godwin was awakened at midnight by violent ringing of the bell. It was the master of the house in which Shelley lodged, who came to say that Shelley had taken a violent dose of laudanum, and was lying at death’s door. Godwin and his wife hastened to Hatton Garden, and found Shelley in the hands of a doctor, who was forcing him to walk up and down the room. Mrs. Godwin remained with him all next day; he could not speak beyond a “yes” or “no.” The Godwins procured a man and woman to keep watch, and wrote to

\* Miss Clairmont stated that she accompanied Mary to Chapel Street on a visit to Harriet, and that she heard Mary assure Harriet that she would not think of Shelley’s love for her. Shelley’s threat of suicide, says Miss Clairmont, overcame Mary’s resolution.

Madame de Boinville, who came and stayed with him for a week until he was recovered. "I do not know, but I think Mary must have written and found means of conveying some note to him, for his spirits rose, and he said he should not attempt his life again." [Miss Clairmont adds a note to the effect that the porter of the shop in Skinner Street was bribed by Shelley, and conveyed letters between them.] Godwin frequently visited Shelley, and they discussed philosophy, logic, history, together. On July 27, three weeks after Shelley took the laudanum, Godwin spent two hours with him. [This throws back the poisoning to July 6, on which day Shelley dined at Skinner Street. Godwin's diary shows that Shelley was constantly active during the month of July until at least the 18th.] On July 28, the girls disappeared. At first it was supposed that they had been delayed in their morning walk. At one o'clock the alarm became extreme. It was ascertained that they had driven off with Shelley for Dover. In the evening, Mr. Marshall started by the mail, arrived at Dover next morning, learned that the fugitives had crossed the Channel in an open boat, and crossed himself in pursuit. He found them at Dessein's Hotel, a carriage and horses at the door. He saw Shelley; implored him to allow the girls to return, which Shelley refused. "You cannot," said Marshall, "be in love with Claire." "No," replied Shelley, "I am not in the least in love with her; but she is a nice little girl, and her mother is such a vulgar, commonplace woman, without an idea of philosophy, I do not think she is a proper person to form the mind of a young girl." Shelley looked very scornful. The interview lasted only five minutes. Marshall asked to see Claire, but Shelley positively refused to permit this. Marshall then went to the English Consul, but he was out, and an hour or more was lost. When Marshall and the Consul returned to the hotel, the fugitives were gone. Marshall had to wait for money from London; he then followed Shelley to Paris, and found that, after one night at a hotel, he and the girls with a donkey had started, it was supposed, for Italy. [This whole story shows Mrs. Godwin's fine inventive faculty. It was (as Godwin's journal and the journal of Mary and Shelley show) she, and she alone, who followed the fugitives. On Mrs. Godwin's arrival at Calais, Claire spent the night with her mother. Mrs. Godwin evidently did not wish Lady Mountcashell to know that Claire went on to Paris by her own desire, and disregarded her mother's entreaties.] Mrs. Godwin has ascertained that the two girls used to walk daily in the wilderness of the Charterhouse, where a young gentleman, who must have

been Shelley, would join them. The gardener's wife says that the fair young lady always sat in one of the arbours, while the little young lady would walk up and down by herself.

*Letter III.* (41, Skinner Street, November 15, 1814). Mrs. Godwin is out of health, and Godwin suffers deep dejection. The absence of Mary and Claire has been kept as far as possible secret, yet it somehow has got abroad, perhaps through the clerks of the shop, perhaps through Harriet Shelley. Acquaintances have fallen away. The other day Harriet called, and said she had received an affectionate note from Shelley, saying there was money at their bankers', and she might draw as much as she liked; there was no date, and only the London postmark. She said it was reported about town that Godwin had sold the two girls to Shelley—Mary for £800, and Claire for £700; no one knew better than she did what a wicked calumny it was, and so she assured every one. She was in good spirits, as every one tells her that her husband will return to her. Longdill, Shelley's solicitor, has written to say that he had had a letter from Shelley, begging him to pay a debt of Godwin's—£200—coming due on December 1, which Shelley had promised to meet. Godwin and Mrs. Godwin wished to refuse the succour, but yielded to the advice of Madamo Boinville, Mrs. Turner, and Jemmy Marshall, although it humbles Godwin's pride. Frances has returned from her aunts'; her emotion was deep when she heard of the sad fate of the two girls; she cannot get over it. The house is a gloomy one—no Mary to help Mrs. Godwin, with her great talents, her sagacity, her steady industry; no Claire, with her blithe looks and affectionate, obliging ways. [Mary Shelley's journal shows that on November 13 Claire Clairmont went to stay at Skinner Street with her mother. She wrote to Mary on that day to say that she was very happy; but on November 15 she left, informing Godwin that she would not reside any longer in his house. It was on the same day, the 15th, that this letter was written to Lady Mountcashell. Mrs. Godwin's words with respect to Mary, or those assigned to her by Miss Clairmont (for the two copies of this letter vary in the description of Mary, the second being the fuller), must not mislead us into supposing that her stepmother had a liking for Mary. Lady Mountcashell writes to Mrs. Godwin, "The impression you gave me of Mary makes me think her conduct perfectly natural—she only acted like a person who cares for nothing but herself; but I am surprised at Jane, from whom you had taught me to expect something better."]

*Letter IV.* (41, Skinner Street, February 7, 1815). Godwin

refused to thank Shelley for the £200, but told Mrs. Godwin she might do so if she liked. This she did (sending her letter through Longdill), and at the same time she laid before Shelley the wrong he had done in robbing her of her child, and implored him to let her see Claire. Her not knowing philosophy did not make her love her child the less. Shelley wrote to say that if she promised not to urge Claire to return home, he would offer no opposition to a meeting. Accordingly, it was settled that they should meet in the Temple Gardens. Claire seemed joyful to see her mother. She told how on July 28 Mary waked her at four, and asked her to take an early walk. At the corner of Hatton Garden they found Shelley with a post-chaise, and then they said they were going to run away to France, and Claire must go with them to save herself from her mother's anger. [This is cancelled, and "as she spoke French, which they could not," is substituted]. Claire wanted to return home, but Mary entreated her to yield, and Shelley pushed her into the chaise. "Neither of them spoke a word to her; Mary lay the whole journey with her head against the side of the chaise. Mr. S—— sat in the middle, whispering consolation to her, and Claire looked out of the window, and sometimes shed a tear or two, and said she felt as if the end of the world were come." [The narrative of the journey to Lucerne and return by the Rhine follows, with a good many cancelled and substituted passages evidently written by Claire.] Claire was the same as ever, always delighted with everything, always admiring, always content, and finding people heavenly and delightful. She was very pale; had been ill, and was bled; besides, Shelley would not allow her to eat meat. Shelley set her lessons in French, Latin, Italian, history; but would not let her go on learning music or singing. He will never go out alone, fearing the attack of a Mr. Leeson whom he offended in Dublin, and who follows him from place to place, meaning to stab him; so Claire walks with him. Mary is very cross with Claire. Shelley said he thought Mary was jealous of his giving Claire instruction, but he was not sure. Claire thinks Shelley absolutely perfect. Neither Mrs. Godwin, nor Peacock, nor Hookham believes in Leeson's existence. [As to the alleged difficulty which Mrs. Godwin had in seeing Claire, it may be observed that, almost immediately on returning from the Continent, Shelley wrote to Godwin, giving his address in Margaret Street. On Friday of that same week, Mrs. Godwin and Fanny paid a visit to the window, but refused to speak to Shelley when he went out to them. There was communication with Claire

through letters of Godwin, meetings with Fanny, visits of Charles Clairmont, and, as already noted, in November, 1814, Claire was, for at least two nights, sleeping in her mother's house.]

*Letter V.* (41, Skinner Street, April 7, 1815). [This letter is unfinished, and is throughout cancelled by Miss Clairmont. It does not appear in the second copy of the letters.] Mrs. Godwin has not written to Lady Mountcashell for some months, hoping that the mystery as to the whereabouts of Shelley and the two girls would cease. "Some slight indications led us to believe that they had returned to England, and were not far from London." [As noted above, Mrs. Godwin called at the window of their lodgings on Friday, September 16, the fugitives having returned on the 13th, and Shelley having written to Godwin on the Friday.] One of Godwin's clerks thought he had seen Shelley at Highgate. Mr. Marshall inquired of the magistrate at Bow Street what step should be taken to discover the girls' abode. Some officers were engaged in the business, but it cost much money. The officers did not gain the least trace, and so the affair after some weeks was dropped. We are still in as much ignorance of their abode as ever. [This seems to be altogether an invention of Mrs. Godwin; communication at this time was free and frequent through Fanny and Charles Clairmont, and when Mary's baby was born, in February, Mrs. Godwin sent by Charles a gift of linen.] Hookham says that Shelley is very good-natured, and will allow Claire to return; but is it good-natured to take a child from her mother, because the poor mother is a vulgar, commonplace woman, and ignorant of philosophy? Claire is cruel and unfeeling to allow months to elapse without writing. [Miss Clairmont adds a note to the effect that Shelley told her it would be useless to write, as he had heard from Hookham that Mrs. Godwin was so angry that she had resolved never to hold any intercourse with her daughter—which, adds Miss Clairmont, was utterly false. In fact, however, she had means of knowing her mother's mind through Fanny Godwin and Charles Clairmont, and she had been staying for a time with her mother. Claire refused on March 11 to return to Skinner Street. Three days after this letter to Lady Mountcashell was written, Mrs. Godwin "paraded before the windows" of Shelley's lodgings. She had left home "in a pet," as letters from Skinner Street stated, and would not return for the night].

*Letter VI.* (41, Skinner Street, July 28, 1815). Since the last letter, Mary has given birth to a child who lived only an hour. [The child born in February lived nearly a fortnight; Mrs. Godwin

knew of its birth when she last wrote to Lady Mountcashell, for she had sent linen to Mary on February 23]. Godwin is ill, and conceals his sufferings; he refuses to see Mary, though Mrs. Godwin begged him to do so. Frances continues to be melancholy. She is going again to Dublin for a month or two. Claire has left Shelley and Mary. Mary was so jealous, Claire would not stay with her. Mrs. Bishop opposed her return to Skinner Street, as she would not have Fanny associate with Claire. Mrs. Godwin sent Mrs. Bishop's letter to Shelley, and reproached him with having deprived Claire of her home. He replied that he would never regret having withdrawn one victim from the tyranny of prejudice, and he undertook to leave her an independence in his will. It being advisable to place Claire at a distance from Shelley and Mary, Mrs. Godwin sent her to Mrs. Bicknell, a widow lady, at Lynmouth. Claire has been with her two months. There has been an exchange of letters between Godwin and Shelley on money matters. Godwin's only letter was in a style of freezing coldness.

The letter is unfinished in the earlier copy, but Miss Clairmont gives a few lines of an ending in the later version. She adds a note of her own to the effect that Shelley at Bracknell fell in love with Mrs. Turner. Madame de Boinville and Mrs. Turner were indignant, and broke off his acquaintance; but Harriet Shelley continued to visit them, and remained at Bracknell, while Shelley took refuge in London. The stanzas dated April, 1814, are addressed to Madame de Boinville and Cornelia Turner. In August, 1813, Shelley came of age. He was at Edinburgh, and his first act was to marry Harriet in an Episcopal Church in Edinburgh, their marriage of 1811 having taken place at Gretna Green. Early in 1814 he fell in love with Mrs. Turner; in April of that year he fell in love with Frances Godwin; and in July eloped with Mary Godwin.

[Shelley was not in Edinburgh in August, 1813. He was never married at Gretna Green, the original Scotch marriage being perfectly regular. I have no doubt that the story of a second Scotch marriage is untrue. In April, when Shelley is said to have been in love with Fanny Godwin, he was not once at Godwin's house. In March, when he is said to have been in love with Mrs. Turner, he was remarried to Harriet Shelley in a London church. On April 18, 1814, Madame de Boinville wrote from Bracknell to Hogg, "Shelley is again a widower; his beauteous half went to town on Thursday." It does not look as if any breach had taken place between Shelley and the Boinville household. The passion for Mrs. Turner, assigned in an earlier letter to November, 1813 (when



Shelley was in Edinburgh), is now transferred to March, 1814. In November, 1814, Mr. Turner, the wronged husband of this story, is one of the very few persons who makes a friendly call at Shelley's lodgings; and later, he is selected by Godwin to act as intermediary in delicate negotiations between him and Shelley. In 1837, Madame de Boinville writes of a young friend, "Mr. Godwin and Shelley, I am sure, would have valued him. This is high praise, but I feel that he deserves it;" and she inquires, "Is Ianthe happy in her marriage? and does she inherit any of her father's moral and intellectual nature?" Somewhat later she speaks affectionately of her copy of "Queen Mab" as "a relic of genius, of friendship, of past happy days." Miss Clairmont, then a school-girl at Walham Green, of course knew nothing directly of what took place at Bracknell in 1813-14. The only immediate authority for the statement that Shelley was in love with Mrs. Turner is Harriet Shelley, as represented in one copy of Mrs. Godwin's second letter, where the date given is November, when Shelley was in Edinburgh, not at Bracknell; or Christmas (cancelled), when he is elsewhere represented as teaching Italian to Claire in Skinner Street. It is the fashion with some women to transform, in their imagination, to amorous feeling any and every interest which a man may take in one whose sex is other than his own. Shelley, undoubtedly, was charmed by Mrs. Turner, though he was more highly pleased with her mother; and in the French, sentimental atmosphere of the Boinville circle there may have been incidents which naturally awakened Harriet's wifely jealousy. In 1819, Shelley wrote to Peacock, "Cornelia [Turner], though so young when I saw her, gave indications of her mother's excellences; and, certainly less fascinating, is, I doubt not, equally amiable and more sincere."

In her elder years Miss Clairmont contemplated writing a book to illustrate, from the lives of Shelley and Byron, the dangers and evils resulting from erroneous opinions on the subject of the relation of the sexes. She speaks of Shelley as inconstant, as not being able to distinguish truth from falsehood (which last she thinks may have been due to the effects of laudanum), and at the same time as one who "believed in everything there is of good, of beautiful, of holy, in the world; he believed in every tradition there has been of moral sentiment from Prometheus to Christ." I can find no evidence of Shelley's being a drinker of laudanum, except on rare occasions when suffering some acute physical or mental anguish. As to his truthfulness, Trelawny wrote, "I found the poet always truthful. His vivid imagination might occasionally delude him as

it does others—for instance, his account of the person assaulting him at the post-office; I doubted it, but it may have been. In all the ordinary occurrences of life he was truthful." Miss Clairmont's opinion, as expressed in 1833, in a letter to Mrs. Hogg,\* may be taken for whatever the reader thinks it is worth. "What a contrast does he present in his biography to the other biographies of the day! As good and great as possible—as little fearing to be looked into as one of Plutarch's heroes."]

\* Mrs. Williams returned to England and became—I believe in 1826—Mrs. T. Jefferson Hogg. Miss Clairmont died unmarried on March 19, 1879.





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